

MA M

SOUTH AFRICA

MARCH 2016

VALYA ROMANOVA
SIZZLING
UP THE STREETS

STEVE WYNN
THE VISIONARY
WHO MADE
LAS VEGAS

SOLDIER
OF FORTUNE
THE *UNTOLD*
STORY

FASTER
HARDER
STRONGER
TOP TRAINING MYTHS
BUSTED

from HUGO BOSS to
LONDON HAS FALLEN
GERARD
BUTLER
is doing it all, excellently

LAS
VEGAS
SIN CITY
CONFIDENTIAL

ED THORP
MATHEMATICIAN
WHO BEAT THE
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Style:
HOW TO
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IN CINEMAS 4 MARCH 2016



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WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

by DIRK STEENEKAMP

It's one of those sayings that we've all heard, one of very few sayings that anyone in the world will know, even if they have never set foot in Sin City. Big Hollywood producers have shot countless films in the little desert town and apparently many bodies are buried out there as well - people who didn't listen to the mob bosses who ran the Vegas casinos back then. Modern-day Vegas still has a certain "sin-nism" attached to it, but these days casinos are run by huge Fortune 500's. It is regarded as the fight capital of the world and still by far, as *The Hangover* would suggest, the best place to go to celebrate your bachelors party. In this issue we look at some of the best aspects about this crazy city, so save up those buffalos and tick it off your bucket list. One of the greatest actors of our time and a personal favourite of mine, Gerard Butler, is long considered the ultimate Hollywood nice guy. He has really nailed a couple of roles and his latest, *London Has Fallen*, is no different so we take a look at the Hugo Boss spokesman on page 38. We bust training myths, look at the importance of supplementation and show you the latest and hottest casual-business looks.

Enjoy this issue and living #ThisMaximLife.



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illustrations Toon53 Productions
motoring editor John Page
motorcycle editor Gavin Perry
sports editor Brandon Goings
senior photo editor Luba V Nel
advertising sales Tasha Pienaar

for more information

PHONE: +27 11 463-3546
MAIL: PO Box 71450, Bryanston,
Johannesburg, South Africa, 2021
ADDRESS: 33 Ballyclare Drive, Bryanston,
Ballywoods Office Park, Rosewood House, 1st Floor
EMAIL: info@maximmag.co.za WEB: www.maximmag.co.za
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SEVEN



THE NEW **INTENSE** FRAGRANCE FOR MEN

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IT'S HUGO BOSS, BABY!

There's the full range of the Hugo Boss, Boss Bottled fragrances. Discover exactly which one suits you best.

Text by GREG FORBES

It's a global brand associated with luxury, style and success. Possibly one of the brands that most young men aspire to own, but when it comes to the costs associated with the clothing, it's no surprise that the most commonly owned item of Hugo Boss is one of their colognes. That's no judgement, as Hugo Boss have successfully launched many colognes over the years, but my personal favourite within their ranges is the Boss Bottled range.

The question is, how different can all these colognes be from one another? Yes, I have also been taken in by fragrance houses, most notably those that have fashion extensions, who bring out ranges of colognes that are so similar that they might as well be the same, but Hugo Boss is the exception.

Hugo Boss launched its new extension, Boss The Scent, at end of August 2015. It's a bottle of seduction, created to make women weak at the knees, "Slow, steady, tense with anticipation", they say, and their new ad campaign is sure to get your heart racing. Produced and directed by Darren Aronofsky (*Black Swan* and *Requiem for a Dream*), the commercial introduces Theo James as the face of The Scent - but the commercial does more in one minute than what *Fifty Shades of Grey* tried to do in the two hours of time that were stolen from us.

The Scent has an opening note of ginger, and then gives way to a mixture of lavender and maninka fruit, and then ends with an intense leather note. It is a rather interesting blend, and certainly takes your sense of smell for a wild ride. What's more is that it is strong, won't wear off easily, and will certainly leave an impression.

Next - the newer interpretation - the Boss Bottled Oud. As the name suggests, it is an oriental and woody fragrance for men, with top notes of citrus and apple and a very strong base note compilation of agarwood (oud), sandalwood and cypriol oil. Interestingly, agarwood has become the new 'it' ingredient in men's fragrances. It is a rather rare, rich, aromatic resin and is produced by the aquaria

tree. The resin is then distilled into a pure oil extract, and combined with the tree's brown and white woods.

Also launched earlier this year, Boss Bottled Intense, is a stronger version of the original Boss. While it is not as sweet as the original, it still has that undeniable luxury manliness that the original had - just with enhanced woody and spicy notes and a higher concentration of the scented oils. The telltale notes of fresh apple, bergamot blossom and green orange blossom open the fragrance, followed by clove, geranium, and cinnamon at the heart, and the base is composed of precious woody notes of sandalwood, cedar and vetiver, along with vanilla. If you loved the original Boss Bottled fragrance, but want something a little more intense to match your personality, then this one is for you.

The original Hugo Boss, Boss Bottled, was brought out to represent the spirit of Boss captured in a bottle - the combination of timeless male elegance and style of the modern man as many have come to love. The original opens with fresh top notes of red apple, moving into the heart of dewy, floral notes as well as spicy cinnamon. It then graduates into the smooth, woody effects of amber. This one started it all and is a must-have, staple fragrance that every fragrance collector should own.

To round off the collection and to prove that there is a Boss Bottled for every occasion, there is the Boss Bottled Night. This fragrance is one that must be tried by every Hugo Boss-lover, and this is more than just a slight variation of the original. It is a far more aromatic fragrance, with a heavy hand on the woody notes, and less on the apple and citrus. It starts with lavender and birch tree aromas, moving to heart notes of African violet, and then onto the warm base notes of the louro amarelo tree and sensual musk. This fragrance is for the ambitious man who, even at night, wants to exude his seductive, intense and extremely masculine composition. ■



From Left: Hugo Boss Intense 50ml R1 000, 100ml R1 340; Hugo Boss The Scent 50ml R1 000, 100ml R1 370, 200ml R1 835; Hugo Boss Night 50ml R955, 100ml R1 265, 200ml R1 755; Hugo Boss Oud 50ml R1 245, 100 ml R1 650; Hugo Boss Bottled 50ml R955, 100ml R1 265, 200ml R1 755.

HIGH ROLLER

Text by GREG FORBES

New products on shelf this month.



Clockwise from top: Shower to Shower Men roll-ons R13; Kiehl's x Zoolander 2 Limited edition Daily Reviving Concentrate R799; A*Men Pure Tonka R1 195; Shower to Shower Men deodorants R22; Kiehl's x Zoolander 2 Limited edition Midnight Recovery Concentrate R799; Dolce&Gabbana The One Royal Night R2 035 for 150ml; New Shield Motion Sense deodorant R29.

INDIVIDUALLY CONNECTED

Text by JOHN PAGE



Placing a technology twist on the definition of luxury.

There's a lot with the new BMW 7-Series to rewire your brain. First thing *Maxim* does at the Cape Town launch is master the eerie and much-vaunted gesture control. I want to change the volume, but turning things and tapping buttons is deathly old-fashioned, and with this car BMW is targeting the technophiles of interaction with electronic devices simultaneously glued to their hands. Instead, what you do in the BMW's cabin is stir the air clockwise somewhere in the vicinity of the dashboard, usually in time to the beat, as one can't help but do. Dismiss a phone call? Swipe your hand. Answer? Point to the screen. Gesture control can interpret five very subtle finger movements, clamp, point, rotate, swipe, and a two-finger command. Pinch to zoom is another common movement plucked from the smartphone world. All this sounds like a dictionary of insults, but you quickly understand how BMW sees the haptic future and the human



hand as the best natural instrument. It's all very Steve Jobs... well, apart from that slick Android tablet great for reviewing the day's stock market, the weather, or handling pretty much anything else your phone would do.

Some aspects of the new Seven require almost no human interaction. If space in your garage has been swallowed by mountain bikes and a dusty treadmill, you can still glide the 7-Series into a space mere inches wider via the smartest key we've ever put in our pockets. With a key so evolved beyond the serrated blade/emergency bottle opener, BMW's electronic fob (which borders on needing its own review), one can set the car's temperature before you get in, or show the current fuel level.

Everything is layered with complexity; the seats massage, cool and heat, the glass roof can change transparency and resemble a starry night, the dials glow redder the harder you drive it and the front lights illuminate the darkest areas and balance out the lighter areas. Back at Munich while one team of brains sorted out wireless charging, over in the other corner new materials were being unloaded; these would trim 130 kilograms from the Beemer's lanky frame. Cape Town's Franschhoek Pass normally spits heavy cars over the side of the mountain, but now you can blitz up and over like something out of M Division. And that's the difference between this luxury car and so many other wooden coffers. Underneath all the electronic synapses is a sweet-handling BMW that mitigates backseat motion sickness, or quite simply urges you to get behind the wheel and give the chauffeur a day off. You don't have to treat corners with respect thanks to a cushy air suspension that quickly adapts to a level sharp ride ahead of time. How's that possible? Navigation forewarns the springs as to what corner degree is coming up next, so the 7-Series' springs know a sharp right hairpin is on the horizon even before you do. BMW's skimmed weight is paired with stronger engines, and even in the diesel one can still flatten 100km/h in not much more than six seconds. The 740i will do the same run in mid-fives, and the plug-in hybrid version brings a wad of environmental kudos with it.

As a 5, or even as a 3-Series owner, the prospect of these features dripping down the range should be more than enough to hold you loyal to the brand. BMW owes a hell of a lot to its 7-Series, so let the next chapter unfold. ■



MOTORING

BORN IN THE U-SA

Text by JOHN PAGE



The Mustang has landed. All hell breaks loose.

If there's any truth to the hackneyed saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder," the new Ford Mustang's arrival in South Africa is going to blow the roof off showrooms this year. Mustang acolytes can now lay their callused hands on the car that has typified every important Hollywood car chase scene, and blasted into existence the term pony car, or muscle car. Until now, owning one was for those with enough patience to ferry them downstream, befriend customs' officials, register them across borders, and then still be left with the steering wheel on the wrong side of the car. A passionate bunch of car nuts willing to go through extreme lengths for a slice of motoring history. Ford has now made owning the best-selling muscle car of 2015 no more difficult than buying a Fiesta. Forgive the not-so-small monetary gap which pretty much defies the working-class status the car initially targeted, and the conversion to right-hand drive is a





milestone for the brand, hooking South Africa and other markets on the pony-car drug for the first time.

Things get off on the right foot and you don't need to be a car aficionado to spot a Mustang's presence from a few hundred metres away. This is a modern-century bully with a blunt bulldoze snout and a thick waist, and it always looks like it's just about to do something unlawful.

As I write this, every bone in my finger wants to say the 5.0 V8 is better than the 2.3 EcoBoost, and owning a 4-cylinder Mustang is an automotive crime. Partly true, and yet an anti-social blast of hooliganism can still be found between good fuel efficiency and other unimportant Mustang figures. That said, still get the badge that says Five-Point-0, because you'll never be able to justify to your mates a Mustang with a half-full bonnet.

There was a time when the perfect burnout was an art form, but under Mustang's professional tutelage, you'll graduate to become an expert in decimating tyres. Two words, Line Lock. Utterly ridiculous

"app" for burnouts, but so laughably effective you literally pray for a red light. Locking the front brakes anchors the Mustang to the spot, and with the V8 pedal flattened, behind the fog of melted rubber very little scenery has changed... isn't that just so Mustang? Yee-hah!

Previous Mustangs fell foul to being labelled one-trick ponies with diabolical handling caused by medieval suspension only fit for quarter-mile times. Polishing its image sees modern suspension bits and less bulk, but just like the cabin, there's still some way to go if it wants to honestly challenge AMG or M-Division.

Fastback (that's "coupe" for Mustang newbies) comes with the option of a self-shifting manual, but Ford has contrived to make the convertible conform to its poser role by only fitting it with the automatic gearbox.

Exchange rate has thrust the Mustang into the fire, but that stinging price withstanding it remains a sinfully fun beast to grip by the horns and put on a show. Not the best, but many would argue that you haven't lived the *Maxim* life until you've owned a muscle car and for now in SA, the Mustang is the one and only. ■

RIDE



THE ITALIAN GODDESS

Ducati 1299 S

Text and Photography by GAVIN PERRY

Ducati has always been at the top of the bike aspiration list, with a long racing heritage and truly unique and beautiful bikes. So, how does the 1299 S Panigale measure up to its predecessors?

Yes, it's a V-twin superbike, and yes, it's bigger than ever before, with an engine displacement of 1285cc delivering you 205hp. No big deal, right? Because all the top-of-the-logs superbikes are putting that out or close enough. But all of the rest fighting for Best Superbike in the World are all inline-cylinder, high-revving screaming machines, and Ducati stands alone as the black sheep... or does it? So, there was a time in 2010 when the superbike world was giving you X, and BMW came along and said, "Hey, look at this here Y," and totally turned the superbike world on its head with their S1000RR, and all its features, advanced technology, and electronics. Everyone has pretty much caught up now, and available horsepower vs. tech and features, closely matched. In a good rider's hands, they can all perform and do the same things. However, the Panigale just seems to do it better, smoother, faster, and with way more style, flair, and just sheer heart and soul.

The 1299 that I test rode was the S, which means it came with every possible piece of hardware and electronics as well as cosmetic upgrades you could dream of. It has the best of everything, Brembo brakes, front and rear suspension including string damper are all by Ohlins, a form of semi-active suspension linked to very-easy-to-use ride settings and modes. Basically, it can firm front damping under braking, and firm rear shock under acceleration. Finding the setting that matches your weight and ride style is easy through the user-friendly menu and setup. Other tech aspects are the gearbox, quick shifter, clutchless downshift, and Auto-Blip, with its accompanying electronics package. The BMW S1000RR and 1299 lead the pack as the only two superbikes currently offering this as a standard feature, and my word has the Ducati got it right! It is so smooth and so fast, I still can't take it all in. As fast as your brain is able to tell your foot to move either upshift or downshift, this bike can do it. This feature makes you a better, more capable rider, especially on a track setting. Imagine approaching a bend after a good fast straight, having to gear down twice before turning. With no need of the clutch, you tap your foot twice with no trauma to the suspension or bike's movement,

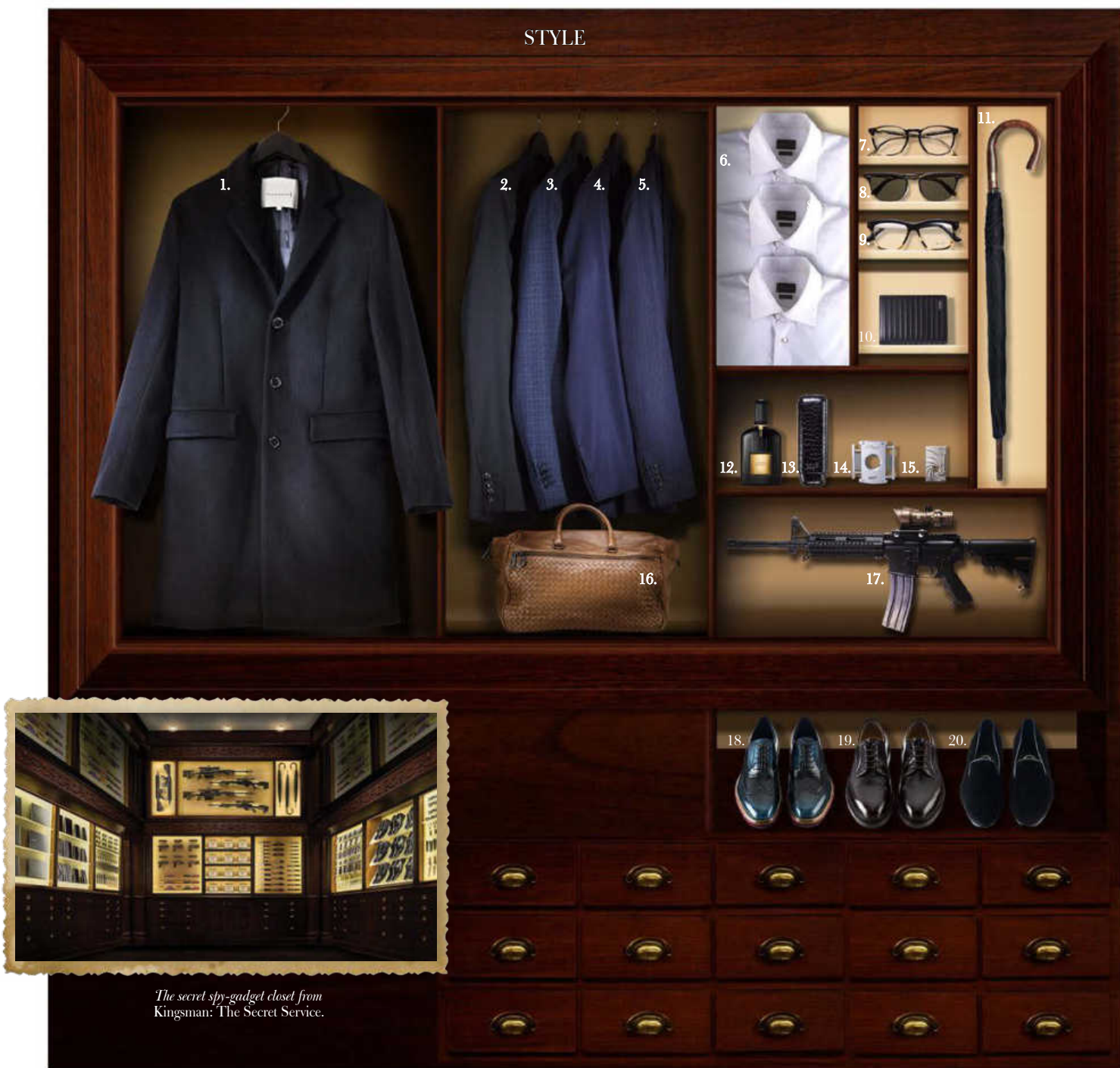
everything is taken care of smoothly and quickly, and you lean into your corner like a seasoned champion. This bike is pure perfection.

Aesthetically, with no doubt or debate, the 1299 is the most beautiful and amazingly-put-together bike available for purchase. The workmanship and build quality is unmatched. It's in the finer details that you really notice this. Even the front mudguard, it's so close to the wheel and so precise that when you look back at another bike, you ask yourself what the heck they are doing. Everything about the way the Ducati has been built and put together is done to make a statement, a statement about not being normal, or average. A sexy, single swingarm, an exposed rear-forged mag, neat, tucked-away, floor-hugging twin exhaust pipes, and an offset rear shock; oh, and let's not forget to mention the sparkly LED lights at the front. Perfection. Behold the supermodel goddess of the biking world. This is so clear with all the attention this bike draws everywhere I take it. And if the standard looks aren't good enough, there is an Akrapovic-exhaust-system upgrade for both headers and canisters that not only gives you even more thunderous sound and increased performance, but also blows the visual beauty of this bike through the roof. Because the headers are titanium and Ducati has exposed the pipes so nicely in the build, you get these beautiful, mirror-blue titanium pipes exposed for all to see, leaving people speechless.

So, are there cons? If I have to nitpick, when you stop at a traffic light and put your left leg down, you can feel the offset rear shock. And because of the build, they have wrapped the one header under the seat. So, yes, it gets super hot under the seat when you are standing still. But let's be honest, is there any guy out there who would complain about the hottest women in the world scratching his back during sex? I have ridden enough bikes and compared them long and hard to know that this is something truly special. It's, by far, a front-runner in the superbike world of today, and because it ticks all of the right boxes, I give it a 10 out of 10. Yes 10, because unlike before, the Ducati isn't too expensive anymore. In fact, a Ducati is more affordable than it's ever been, and with some of the rivals' prices, why wouldn't you get a Ducati?

One thing is for sure, if you do opt for the goddess, you will never look back or regret your purchase. Rather, you will ride the streets like a king. ■

STYLE



The secret spy-gadget closet from Kingsman: The Secret Service.

GENTLEMAN'S SPY CLOSET

If there's anything we learnt from the film Kingsman, it's the importance of a well-outfitted spy closet. Go undercover in style with these essentials.

Photography by MARK PLATT and Styling by ANDREW PORTER

Coats 1. MACKINTOSH, 2. CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION, 3. SALVATORE FERRAGAMO
4. ZEGNA, 5. PAUL SMITH. Shirt 6. ZEGNA. Glasses 7. and 8. OLIVER PEOPLES, 9. TOM FORD.
Passport Cover 10. RIMOWA. Umbrella 11. SWAINE ADENEY BRIGG. Cologne 12. TOM FORD. Cigar Case 13. DAVIDOFF.
Cigar Cutter 14. S.T. DUPONT. Lighter 15. S.T. DUPONT. Bag 16. BOTTEGA VENETA. Gun 17. COLT.
Shoes 18. SALVATORE FERRAGAMO, 19. and 20. GEORGE CLEVERLEY.

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GENTLEMEN SPIES ROLL CALL **SIDNEY REILLY** Russian-born and recruited by the English, Reilly was given bricks of cash for bribes, and a fat salary that indulged his appetite for women. **DUSKO POPOV** This wealthy Serbian, a double agent for Britain during World War II, enjoyed a lavish lifestyle in between and sometimes during his missions. **MALKO LINGE** The creation of Gerard de Villiers, Linge is a Harvard-educated Austrian prince and agent for the CIA. Linge lives in a castle, dates a baroness, and has his handmade suits tailored to accommodate a discreet, lightweight handgun. **MATT HELM** The protagonist in Donald Hamilton's spy novel series, *Matt Helm*, was played by Dean Martin on the screen. Upbeat and easy-going, Helm is less interested in danger than in the company of sexy ladies. **JOHN STEED** The Eton-educated Steed, portrayed in TV series *The Avengers* (played by Patrick Macnee, left), is best remembered for his signature accessories, a bowler (metal-plated to repel bullets) and an umbrella (which concealed a sword, disguised surveillance equipment, and could store a cache of whiskey).



This Spread: Coat 1. MACKINTOSH. Guns 2. WALTHER, 3. COLT. Camera 4. PANASONIC. Binoculars 5. LEICA. Pens 6. MONTBLANC. Dagger 7. COLD STEEL. Throwing Stars 8. COLD STEEL. Card Case 9. ETTINGER. Grooming Kit 10. RIMOWA. Knife 11. COLD STEEL. Tie Bars 12. TOM FORD,

13. MONT BLANC. Driving Gloves 14. AUTODROMO.

Knives 15. SCHRADER. Briefcase 16. BOTTEGA VENETA. Jacket 17. TOM FORD. Cufflinks 18. THOMAS PINK, 19. and 20. DUNHILL, 21. ETTINGER, 22. DUNHILL, 23. MONT BLANC 24. DUNHILL 25. ETTINGER, 26. THOMAS PINK. Sunglasses 27. RALPH LAUREN, 28. BOTTEGA VENETA, 29. RALPH LAUREN, 30. TOM FORD, 31. OLIVER PEOPLES. Watches 32. and 33. OMEGA, 34. SEIKO, 35. BELL & ROSS, 36. OMEGA, 37. SAMSUNG.

Watches 38. OMEGA, 39. TAG HEUER, 40. SUUNTO. Wallet 41. DUNHILL. Flask 42. J.W. HULME.

Pocket Watch Chain 43. TOM FORD. Umbrella 44. ZEGNA. Driving Gloves 45. AUTODROMO. Baton 46. SCHRADER. Ties 47. THOMAS PINK, 48. and 49. CALVIN KLEIN, 50. THOMAS PINK, 51. CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION, 52. BOTTEGA VENETA.

Shoes 53. SALVATORE FERRAGAMO, 54. GEORGE CLEVERLEY, 55. BALLY.

STYLE



Silk Scarf 1. BOTTEGA VENETA. *Sunglasses* 2. OLIVER PEOPLES, 3. BOTTEGA VENETA, 4. AUTODROMO, 5. OLIVER PEOPLES. *Bow Ties* 6. and 7. BALLY, 8. BRIONI. *Flask* 9. J.W. HULME. *Backpack* 10. LOUIS VUITTON. *Ties* 11. TOM FORD. *Cigar Case* 12. GHURKA. *Folding Knives* 13. COLD STEEL. *Handgun* 14. SIG SAUER. *Sword Cane* 15. COLD STEEL. *Coat* 16. BRIONI. *Shirts* 17. TOM FORD, 18. THOMAS PINK. *Bag* 19. BOTTEGA VENETA. *Belts* 20. PAUL SMITH. *Shoes* 21. GEORGE CLEVERLEY, 22. SALVATORE FERRAGAMO.



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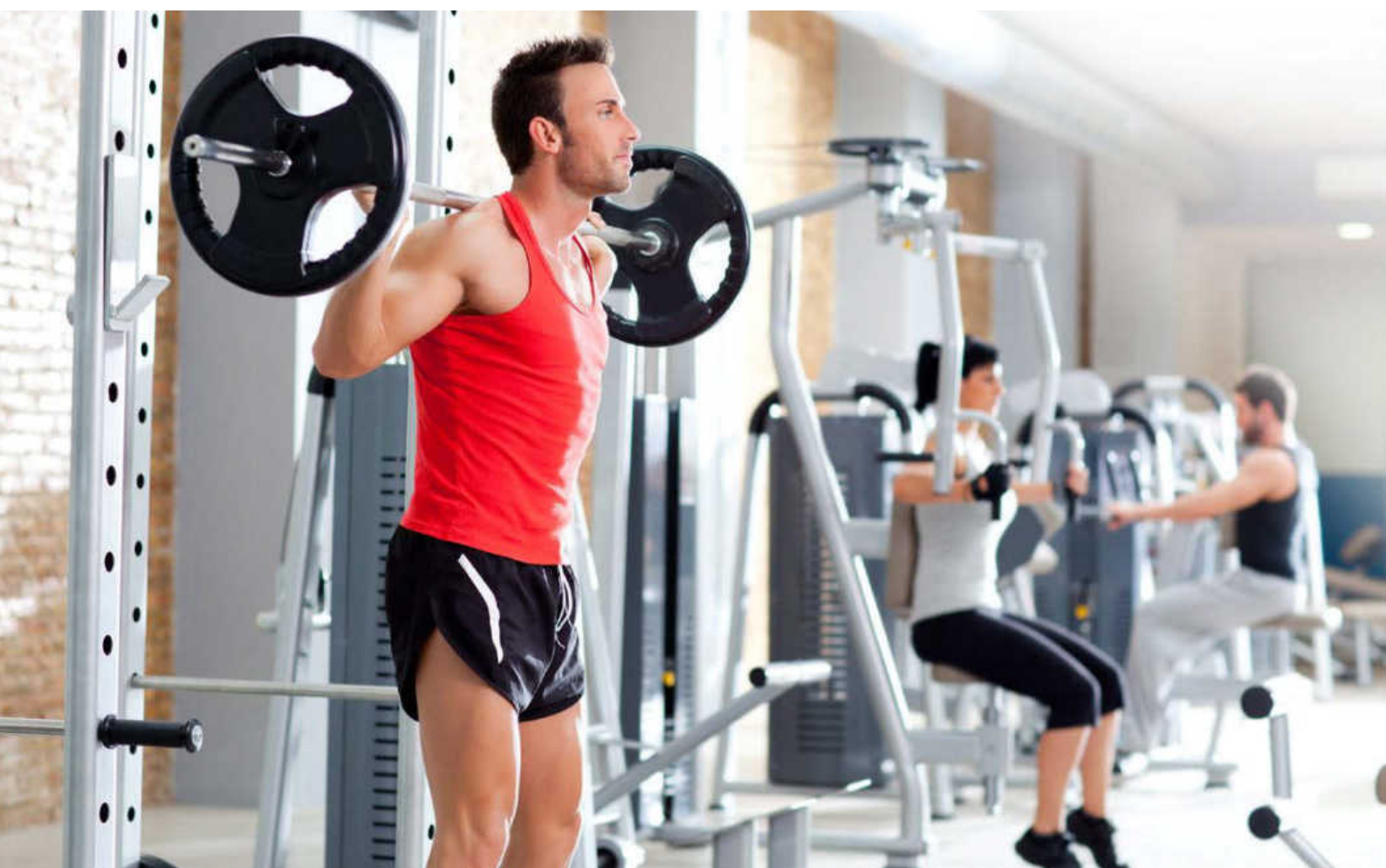
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CRUSHING THE GYM MYTHS

Finally, you can breathe a sigh of relief. The new year “resolutionists” have left the gym, and you have the bench back to yourself.

Text by TASHA PIENAAR



Over the past few weeks you have had the misfortune of listening to the newbies professing to know every finer detail of exactly how to do that bench press, and exactly what foot placement targets which muscles. Some of these “theories” may have caught your attention but before you go about crunching your way down the road to abs and obliques, it’s only fair to debunk the training myths.

You can get a 6-pack by doing certain types of exercises.

How about “no”. The saying “abs are built in the kitchen” is the truth. You can sit up until the cows come home but if you are taking a bite of a donut every time you do it you are not going to see anything.

Higher reps are the best way to get definition.

A common misconception - especially among the ladies - is that lighter weights are the way to go. Taking it a step further, people also tend to believe that as long as you are repping out to the point of fatigue that is what counts. It does not. The hormonal responses in your body are different when you are doing 30 reps with a 4kg dumbbell as opposed to 6 reps with 15kg. More definition comes from lower body fat, which means cutting some calories.

You can’t be lean all year round.

Oh yes you can. But many people are constantly on the hunt for more - bigger, bulkier, better. In order to achieve your goals of being bigger you are going to have to increase your calories to gain more muscle, but this can be managed properly so that you don’t get that ballooned “I’m bulking bru” look. Being lean takes a lot of discipline and dedication which in turn affects other aspects of your life such as socializing, especially around the party seasons and winter months.

You can eat what you want as long as you train hard and take fat burners.

Repeat after me: You cannot out-train a bad diet. Again. Once more. You can certainly try (I have) and while harder training does lessen the punch of the pizza you had last night, it still doesn’t diminish the effects completely. Fat burners will certainly increase your energy, which will should in theory make your training more intense. Most dedicated athletes who use fat burners do so to target the stubborn fat that is the last to go.



Weight training is bad for your joints.

And slapping your feet onto the hard tarmac isn’t? Lifting weights is controlled, it is non-impact, and if anything it increases the health of your joints because it strengthens the ligaments that hold them together. There have been various studies disputing this myth so if you are wondering, just stop.

It’s better to work one muscle group a day.

Guilty. And currently changing my program as we speak. Hearing the newbies refer to “leg day” and “shoulders day” is not necessarily wrong, but the beauty of weight training is that you can mix it up. Just bear in mind when planning your program that includes biceps, hamstrings and calves that muscles generally take about a day to recover so make sure that you give that group a rest the next day.

You can target where you want to lose fat and train specifically for that.

Not happening. Fat loss is an all over process and your body will start losing fat in some areas before others. Generally, the last to go is the stomach and that is ironically the first place that people want to lose fat. As previously mentioned, the diet is key to getting rid of fat. Your training accelerates it and builds the muscle underneath that proud moment when you shed those last few kilograms, and you have a physique to die for already waiting underneath.

You only burn fat when you are in your fat burning zone, measured by your heart rate monitor.

Also not true. Ever hear of the metabolic window? That’s the time after your training where your body is still burning fat. The body is an amazing machine that will keep eating at your fat stores long after you have left your high intensity sprints on the treadmill. The key again is to keep eating food that will fuel this process and assist in getting rid of those bulky fat stores.

You should train fasted if you want to burn more fat.

This is a highly debated topic because many believe that this may be fact, yet the truth is yes, you will burn fat - along with muscle. Your body requires energy to work and if it doesn’t get the required amount of protein and either fats or carbs before your workout, it has no choice but to target the areas that do have the energy - even if it is stored in your muscles. So yes, you may lose some fat but the risk of losing the muscle that you have worked so hard for is too high. With a well-managed eating plan put together by a coach or trainer who knows what they are doing, you avoid running the risk of burning muscle if you train fasted. Yes, your scale will go down - quite dramatically - but that is because muscle weighs more than fat. ■



“WHAT SUP?”

There is much debate nowadays on which supplements gym-goers should be using. “No, bru, creatine is the way to go,” “Use a fat burner,” “Pre-workout is all you need”. Opinions. Opinions everywhere, yet no one actually knows how important they are.

Text by TASHA PIENAAR

Supplements will enhance the effort you are already putting into your lifestyle. Creatine will increase the intensity, a fat burner will help target those stubborn areas, and pre-workout will definitely give you the pump and motivation you need to get yourself into the gym in the first place. So, when you become the proud owner of the latest gym stack on the market, make sure that the other aspects of your healthy lifestyle are in place, too, because the added benefits of supplements will make sure your work pays off.

Andy Morgan from Ripped Bodies is on point with his explanation, “Cross your eyes and imagine a pyramid as one huge, layered cake with a little red layer at the top which is a cherry. Now, if the first four layers are made of mud, excrement, snot, and sawdust respectively, is that cherry going to make a difference to the taste?”

First things first, your calories. You need to work out exactly what you need to be eating to reach your goal of gaining muscle or losing fat. There are many online calculators to help you work out what your calorie intake needs to be, and this is also determined by how active

you are on a daily basis.

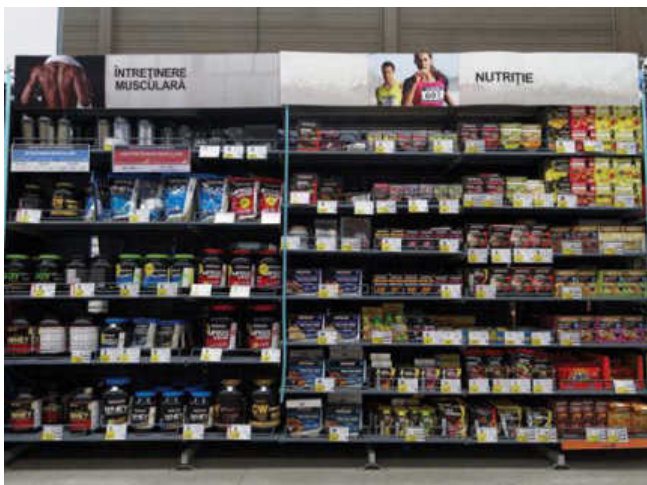
Next is determining your macros, the ratios of carbs, fats, protein, again entirely dependent on your goals of either cutting or bulking.

Then comes the micronutrients (your vitamins and minerals). Your multivitamins will not make up for the nutrients you may lack, but rather enhance what you are consuming. So, if you aren’t up to scratch with your fruit and veg, then that multivitamin is practically wasted. Also, remember to keep your water intake high, along with your fibre, calcium, and magnesium.

Meal timing. Again, everyone claims to be an expert when it comes to this, yet few really know what this really means. Since this is second from the top of our pyramid of importance, the timing of what you eat isn’t as important as what you are eating. Yes, there is most certainly a window of opportunity after your training in terms of your carbohydrate intake. There are many theories about the glycogen being needed to replenish your muscles after a workout, which definitely have some merit, however, this nonsense of “no carbs before bed” is just that, nonsense. If you find that carbs make you lethargic, then use this to your advantage and have them with your dinner. Referring back to everyone being an expert on this topic, it really boils down to personal preference. If you feel that you need carbs pre-workout and this fits into your daily allowance, then that’s up to you. Similarly, if you feel that fasted training is the way to go, then that’s what works, for you.

This brings us to the final point, the crux of this article and the top of the pyramid, the supplement element of your healthy lifestyle. Let’s say that protein is a prerequisite in anyone’s diet, whether they are working out or not. For the avid gym-goer, however, it is in a convenient powder format that is ready to go, not requiring any cooking or prep other than water. I am referring to the added extras that you will find stacked floor to ceiling in the supplement shops. Between the fat burners, the CLAs, the testosterone boosters, there is naturally going to be some confusion as to what you should be taking.

So, here’s a bit of advice, there’s a reason why people tend to leave the glazed cherries for last when having that cake. Get the main elements of your diet right before relying on the latest promises from supplement houses, because that chocolate-flavoured shake is not going to give you that 6-pack you are looking for. ■



With so many different supplements on the shelves, it's difficult to know exactly what you should be buying.



*Tuxedo and bow tie, BOSS.
Shirt, CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION.
Shoes, FRYE.*



MAX
MARTINI
**THE REAL
McCOY**

*Text by T. COLE RACHEL
Photography by MICHAEL MULLER*

In addition to having one of the greatest names ever, actor Max Martini happens to have one of the greatest faces, handsome, strong, and the kind that can easily disappear into almost any role. He's made a name for himself playing tough guys, notably in *Saving Private Ryan* and *Pacific Rim*, and now he continues the streak with Michael Bay's *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*. In the movie, Martini portrays Mark "Oz" Geist, one of the security contractors who risked his life defending the diplomatic compound in Libya. "Most men fantasise about being heroic," the actor says, "I know Hollywood paints me to be a badass, but Mark is the real deal. His bullets were real, mine aren't."

How did you first get involved in *13 Hours*?

The opportunity to be part of a true story is always a draw for me. I've done plenty of (real-life) action movies, including *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Great Raid*, *Captain Phillips*, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, kidding! There is an incredible sense of fulfilment in the retelling of real events. I was very familiar with the events of September 11, 2012. On that day, militants attacked the U.S. Special Mission Compound, and a CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, and a handful of American private security operators engaged in a lengthy battle with them. The American security contractors that either lost or risked their lives on the day of that attack are true American heroes who represent the embodiment of valour and service to their country. It is very important to share their stories, as they are now a part of American history. To be asked to join in that process is an honour. Even before reading the script, I knew that I wanted to be a part of it. I think there is tremendous value in making a movie for the sole purpose of entertaining, but making a movie that entertains and educates is even better.

You're playing Mark "Oz" Geist in the film. Did you meet with him?

I did meet Mark. Initially, we met over the phone. We started off just getting to know each other. He gave me a lot of background information on himself, what he did before and after the military, why he got

into contract work. We talked about politics, family, and raising kids. He made me promise to take a photo with him in Malta for his wife, because he said it would earn him some brownie points! Ha. Then we got into discussing not only the specifics of what took place that day, but also things such as how he reacted emotionally to that situation. For example, how his mind and body responded while rounds were flying by his head, what it felt like to get hit, what it felt like to have shrapnel enter him, and so on. Mark's arm was blown up at the forearm and eventually saved. He graciously talked me through that. Mark was absolutely incredible and so generous in working with me. Right away, he made



it clear that no questions were out of bounds. Eventually, he arrived in Malta, and we met in person in the lobby of our hotel. Ironically, we look like brothers. At one point during filming, we actually put Mark in my wardrobe and threw him into a scene to fuck with Bay. Bay and I kept those games going right up to the end of the shoot. He had the final laugh, though, when he made me do a pickup shot that we had missed during our scheduled shoot days, at the wrap party! He shot it on his iPhone! I was a couple of Crowns in. But Mark and I had a great time, and the face-to-face was priceless. Movies aside, the newly found friendship was the best part of the whole deal. The cast was in "trenches" under a fake statue screaming for our lives, looking up at the sky pretending to see deadly alien spirits, sucking in black fumes that were pumped through industrial fans, and above us, small, Hungarian crewmen scooped shovel-loads of dark-brown mystery

debris out of burlap sacks, and dumped it on our heads as if we were under attack by an unknown enemy force of pure satanic evil. And at that moment, completely covered from head to toe with soot and ash, I thought to myself either, "I can't believe this is my real job," or, "I gotta get a rom-com." One of the two.

Are there people whose work has been a constant source of inspiration, or a kind of guiding light, as you made your way in this industry?

I had an odd childhood. My father is a sculptor and a Ph.D. in philosophy.

This Page: *Sweater*, BRIONI.
Jeans, J BRAND. *Shoes*, FRYE. *Watch*, MTM.
 Opposite Page: *Suit and shirt*, PRADA.
Pocket square, THE TIE BAR. *Shoes*, FRYE.



This page: Jacket and shirt, JOHN
VARVATOS. Jeans, J BRAND.
Shoes, FRYE. Necklace, MIANSAL.
Sunglasses, GARRETT LEIGHT.





Jacket, POLO RALPH LAUREN.
Shirt, GAP. Watch, TIMEX.

My mother was in law enforcement. My stepfather is an award-winning actor, writer, and director. My father is from Rome, Italy. My mother is from Texas, America. I am now an Italian-speaking actor with a degree in fine arts, who shoots a lot of guns in movies. Apparently, I didn't really have a choice. But there have been many people along the way who have had an impact on me and the choices I have made. I'll tell you what I admire. In actors, I admire bravery, the bravery to make daring decisions, the bravery to be unattractive, the bravery to be exposed and vulnerable. I love seeing real people on-screen, or onstage. People who don't look like they stepped off the cover of *Vogue* or *GQ*, or at least make an effort not to. There is also a shortage of men in this business, authentic men, not hairless, 22-year-old boys that we dress up like men. I mean real men... with balls. We need more of them.

Michael Bay is known for his ability to orchestrate action sequences and construct amazing visuals for the screen. How was the experience of working with him?

When you watch Michael Bay work, you understand why he's in the position he is. He's a master at composition. He constructs each frame with incredible precision and attention to detail, layering in props, effects, talent, colour, light, movement. Every day was a master class in filmmaking. They would screen pieces of edited footage occasionally, little teasers, and we would watch them over and over and over. They were stunningly beautiful. I've been extremely lucky to work with the directors that I have worked with, Steven Spielberg, Robert Zemeckis, David Mamet, Guillermo del Toro, Paul Greengrass, and now, Michael Bay. They're all very different. They're all brilliant. In my experiences, I have taken away something unique from each one of them. I'm humbled every time I'm chosen to play on their team.

What have been some of your craziest on-set moments as an actor, the kinds of moments when you look around and think, "I can't believe this is my real job"?

My craziest moment was in Hungary, on a movie that releases in 2016 called *Spectral*. We were in a massive Budapest square surrounded by old, Hungarian government buildings. The production had come in and spread out waste to the place, turning it into a decimated war zone. ■



DEADPOOL

The Marvel cinematic universe is currently an unstoppable force within Hollywood. From the record-breaking Avengers series to the Iron Man/Thor/Captain America stand alones, superhero movies have never been bigger.

Text by ANDRE COETZER

The latest entry into the *Marvel* universe is unlike any other superhero movie ever released. *Deadpool* is raunchy, it's dirty and it takes a mighty swipe at all of the superhero movies that have preceded it. Hilariously funny, *Deadpool* is probably the best superhero movie to be released in quite some time.

Van Wilder Than Before

Ryan Reynolds stars as a spandex-clad superhero, not quite like the others, in the latest and certainly most raunchy Marvel movie, directed by Tim Miller. Those unfamiliar with the *Deadpool* character are in for quite the surprise. *Deadpool* tells the story of former Special Forces operative turned mercenary, Wade Wilson, who after being subjected to a rogue experiment to cure his cancer, leaves him with accelerated healing powers, disfigured skin, an unstable mind and a dark, twisted sense of humour. Wilson adopts the alter ego known as Deadpool and hunts down the man that nearly destroyed his life. On the surface the story might seem like the run of the mill superhero plot, but it's the Deadpool character itself that separates this film from the rest. The movie is filled with nudity, sex jokes and nonstop racy dialogue. This is definitely not something to watch with the kids or granny.

Revenge, A Dish Best Served Funny

Dead set on some serious payback with British villain, Ajax, played by *Game of Thrones*' Ed Skrein, *Deadpool* goes on a hilarious and super violent path of revenge. The film knows exactly when to turn on the

funny and when to switch over to the more poignant moments. Flashbacks throughout the movie remind the audience of Wilson's past and tragic love for the beautiful badass Vanessa (Morena Baccarin) and how fate cruelly intervened to rip him away from her and everything he loved. It's this emotional pain that transforms him into flippancy and violence. Deadpool is not just a wise cracking badass, there is a gravitas to the character which is so important to a good superhero film. Ryan Reynolds turns in a great performance, as the Deadpool character can be obnoxious yet Reynolds brings enough empathy to the character through his rugged charisma and playful teasing of his own movie-star looks.

Rude, Obnoxious And Awesome

Deadpool had all the potential to be a failure, to stink up the screen with its locker room humour and its raunchy violence. Reynolds and his supporting cast do an amazing job of going against the Marvel grain. It is an almost self-referential smack in the face of *The Avengers* and all that came before, and that's why it works. The Deadpool character is unlike any other superhero out there, and it's fantastic that his movie is exactly the same. ■



Scenes from *Deadpool*.





THE SPARTAN LAWYER

From mesmerising the audience as King Leonidas of Sparta in 300 to appearing in numerous "World's Hottest Men" lists, Scottish-born actor Gerard Butler is seen as one of the nicest men in Hollywood.

Text by ANDRE COETZER

Although, things might have been very different for the renowned thespian if he had stuck to his initial belief that acting was not a realistic career choice for a Scottish youth. Fortunately, fate and circumstance played a huge role in the future of one of Hollywood's top leading men.

Born in Paisley, Scotland on the 13th of November 1969, Gerard James Butler grew up the youngest of three children in a devout Roman Catholic family. Hardly a year old, his family relocated to Montreal Canada, where his father tried a few business ventures, all of which ultimately failed. After a year and a half in their adopted new country, Butler's parents divorced, forcing his mother to relocate back to her hometown of Paisley, taking Butler and his two older siblings back with her. It would be 16 years later that Butler would once again see his father.

During his childhood, Butler was enthralled with movies and acting and his mother supported his love by taking him to several auditions. He eventually joined the Scottish Youth Theatre and landed his first role as a street urchin in the production of *Oliver*. Despite his love for theatre and film, Butler did not believe that acting was a viable career choice for him. He was halfway across the world from Hollywood, and at that time Scottish actors were not exactly in high demand. Instead he focused on his education, graduating top of his class in high school. After high school he enrolled in the University of Glasgow where he studied to become a lawyer and solicitor. Again he graduated with honours, and the life of a lawyer seemed to be the future for the young Scotsman. After taking a hiatus to travel the world, Butler returned to Scotland to begin a 2-year traineeship at one of Edinburgh's top law firms, but soon found he despised the job more and more. A week before he was due to finish his traineeship, Butler attended the Edinburgh Film Festival, an experience that firmly cemented his disappointment with his current career choice and in turn enhanced his yearning to be an actor.

By that stage Butler was 25 and felt he had missed his opportunity - that time had passed him by and he was doomed to a life as a lawyer. However, one week later the law firm fired Butler. It was a humiliating period for Butler but one that would only fuel his determination to pursue his acting career. A day after his job termination, Butler made the move to London and worked odd jobs while trying to get his career off the ground. While working as a casting assistant for the play *Coriolanus*, he ran into the play's director, Steven Berkoff, in a coffee shop and begged for a chance to read for the lead role. After giving a rousing performance, Butler was given a lead role. This was the big gap Butler so badly craved. After a successful run in *Coriolanus*, Butler landed the lead in the exact same stage rendition of *Trainpotting* that had inspired him to try acting again. Making the transition from the stage to the screen, in 1997 Butler starred with Judi Dench and Billy Connolly in *Mrs. Brown* and also scored a small part in the James Bond film

Tomorrow Never Dies. During the film's shooting, he was picnicking with his mother near a river and heard screaming from a boy who was in trouble. He immediately dove into the river and saved the boy from drowning, winning a Certificate of Bravery from the Royal Humane Society as an example of his courage and caring.

After acting in a series of largely forgettable films, in 2003, Butler finally got his break with the role of the Phantom in Joel Schumacher's on-screen adaptation of the Broadway musical *Phantom of the Opera*. It was a demanding role that required the actor to sing most of his lines. Though *Phantom* did not hit blockbuster gold, it got Butler recognised in Hollywood, and 4 years later he landed the lead role, as King Leonidas, in *300*, the testosterone-infused historical epic about a small legion of Spartan soldiers defeating the enormous Persian army. To look believable as a warrior king, Butler trained every day for four months in the most intense workout regimen of his life, giving him an incredible physique in time for the shoot.

Butler's role in *300* was a huge boost to his career, he was now a Hollywood superstar. Starring in various high profile films alongside Hollywood heavyweights such as Oscar-winner Hillary Swank, Morgan Freeman and Jennifer Aniston, Butler's star is constantly rising and has never shone more brightly than in his latest film *London Has Fallen*, the sequel to the hit film *Olympus Has Fallen*. Reprising his role as US Secret Service lead agent Mike Banning who once again teams up with US president Benjamin Asher (Aaron Eckhardt) and Vice President Allan Trumbull (Morgan Freeman) to investigate the mysterious death of the British Prime minister. With all the leaders of the Western world attending the funeral, a terrorist mastermind unleashes a plot to eliminate the most powerful leaders and unleash his terrifying vision of the future upon the world. *London Has Fallen* is a classic action thriller with a top notch cast that throws quite a few unexpected surprises at the audience. Butler's performance is once again the stand out piece of the film and it's no wonder that he is considered by many as one of the most talented leading men in Hollywood right now. So much so that Boss Parfums recently announced that he was to join an elite group of Boss Bottled ambassadors for the fragrance, stating that he embodied modern masculinity in the 21st century. In addition to recognising the importance of embodying traditional and modern attributes, Butler pronounces his philosophy: to not confine success and really living life.

Yet, despite all of his success, Gerard Butler is still as down to earth as the young aspiring actor living in Paisley all those years ago and it's no secret as to why he is recognised as one of the nicest guys in Hollywood. Known for his laid-back nature and down-to-earth sense of humor, Butler is renowned for his interaction with his fans and co-workers. From a self-proclaimed mediocre lawyer in Scotland to the brightest star in Hollywood, Gerard Butler will always be the Greek God Slaying Spartan King in our eyes. ■

COVER GIRL

Valya Romanova

When this gorgeous Russian native isn't sizzling up spreads as a model, she is saving lives in the medical industry... what a catch.

Photography by BRIAN B. HAYES



COVER GIRL

Having featured on our website before, you're no stranger to **Maxim**. Safe to say, we love you. How does it feel being on the cover now?

I can't describe in words what it means to me. Being a **Maxim** cover girl is a privilege only a few models in the world ever get. This is definitely a dream come true for me. When I first started to model, I had no idea I would be able to achieve something amazing like this. Now, thanks to **Maxim**, I know that if you dream big, work hard, and believe in yourself, anything is possible.

How did you get into the modelling industry?

I was always interested in fashion and beauty. I used to take my mother's makeup and my sister's dresses and pose in front of the mirror when no one was home. There was one moment in particular when I knew I wanted to be a model. I was looking through the pages of a catalogue and saw a photo of a model in black, lace lingerie standing in front of the mirror with her hair done in curls and her eyes making contact with the camera through the reflection in the mirror. I thought she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I wanted to become a model so there would be a photo of me like that in a magazine. When I was old enough, I went to a casting for a modelling school/agency and they accepted me. From that moment, step-by-step, I was moving towards making my dream a reality.

What's the most challenging shoot you've had to do?

The most challenging was a shoot for an ad in Washington DC, USA. We needed to have the lit-up Capitol building in the background, so the shoot did not start until it was completely dark. I have an incredible phobia of insects. Anything flying or crawling is terrifying for me. Humid, hot, dark summer nights in DC are swamped with bugs. The lighting for the shoot attracted the bugs from the entire city. There were hundreds of insects all around me! I felt them on my skin, my hair, my clothes. I had

to stay very still for us to get a sharp image, but all I wanted to do was scream and run away.

As someone with a medical background, have you had to use your medical expertise for a dire situation outside of the hospital?

I have not. It's funny, in our medical training, we are taught how to "save lives" in any emergency situation, but pretty much none of us wants to ever be in that situation. I am not an exception (laughs). I am sure if something like that happens, I will try my best, though.

What's the most shocking thing you've ever witnessed in your medical career?

One time, I witnessed a true miracle. It was during my residency. I had just started my thoracic surgery rotation, and was introduced to our patients who we were treating. Amongst them was a woman in ICU who had been in a respiratory failure for several weeks. Her prognosis was very grim, and none of us believed she had a chance of making it... but her family did. Her son and her husband were at her bedside day and night. Even though she was on 24-hour life support, they read books and played her favourite music. They brought her favourite blanket, and photos of her happiest moments. One day, she started to improve, slightly. It took a while for her to get off the vent and start breathing on her own, but she did it! By the end of my rotation, she was walking with assistance, and we were making a discharge plan. Stories like this are very rare, but they make you rethink everything you ever knew about medicine.

We hear crazy stories about serial-killer doctors like Harold Shipman. Just how vulnerable are patients lying in hospital beds?

They are vulnerable, not to serial killers, but to the hospital-borne infections and medical errors. Sadly, these two things kill more patients than any serial killer.



"Women are such beautiful, exquisite creatures. Why should only men be able to appreciate them?"



COVER GIRL

“My Russian girlfriends can outdrink any guy at a bar.”

You have Russian origins. What's this thing about you guys and your immunity to copious amounts of vodka? (Laughs) It's genetic! No, really, I noticed that my Russian girlfriends can outdrink any guy at a bar, while dancing and having fun. I do not have an explanation for it. Maybe it's because we start early. There are plenty of 14 and 15-year-old girls who sneak into the clubs and party like animals. I did, too! I got over it quickly, though.

How do you let your hair down?

All through school and my residency I was using clubs as my stress reliever. I would go out with my girlfriends, have a couple of cocktails, and dance all night. These days, I like to travel, to see new places or to do new things. It can be anything from a day trip to a park, to a week on some island.

There was a tongue-wagging article that basically said most women are born bisexual, they're prone to it. Would you agree?

I think so. Look, women are such beautiful, exquisite creatures. Why should only men be able to appreciate them? I think the beauty of women is so powerful that it affects both genders.

What attracts you to a man?

His personality. I am not the type of woman who melts seeing a guy's six-pack, or his Mercedes. However, I can appreciate a man's beauty and success, but that is not what turns me on. I am attracted to men who have a great sense of humour, men who are positive, confident, have a good heart, and men I can talk to not just for hours, but for years, never getting tired. ■





WHAT LEADING MEN WEAR

*Massimiliano Giornetti, creative director for the House of Ferragamo,
discusses classic elegance and lasting qualities in men's fashion.*

Text by MEG O'ROURKE

Salvatore Ferragamo was a creative genius whose success was the product of a deep, quasi-mystical understanding of his purpose.

Born poor in rural Italy into a family of 14 children, he was a fully trained cobbler by the age of 13. He launched himself professionally in California, USA, designing footwear for the studios and its actors, and his long roster of Hollywood A-list clients over the next decades included Douglas Fairbanks, Greta Garbo, Audrey Hepburn, Gregory Peck, Sophia Loren, and Marilyn Monroe. His anatomical studies and passionate desire to heal pained feet led him to create shoes that married design and wearability. Ferragamo claimed, "I do not have to search for styles. When I need new ones, I select from those that present themselves to my mind as I select an apple from the laden dish upon my table." His creations have been exhibited in museums and influenced countless designers, yet Ferragamo founded his fortune on the comfort

of his clients. After his death, in 1960, his widow and children carried on with the company, introducing accessories and ready-to-wear. A century after Salvatore opened his first shop, the Italian luxury brand now has hundreds of stores around the globe, and employs several thousand people. One of those is Massimiliano Giornetti, who joined Ferragamo in 2000, and in 2010 became creative director for the entire label, the first person ever to hold the position at the company. Ferragamo is now one of the oldest luxury fashion brands in the business. The company has expanded its reach to become a major global presence, retailing around the world. To Ferragamo, luxury is synonymous with quality craftsmanship, manufacturing remains exclusively in Italy. Below, Giornetti talks about his creative understanding of Ferragamo's history, the meaning of style, and the inspirations behind his collections.



Salvatore Ferragamo, 1956.

In focusing the vision of a house with so much history, you have chosen to keep the polished tailoring of the brand very much intact. Is there an archive of former designs, and if so, are you interpreting from earlier pieces? Or has your distillation been purely visual?

People think of the word "archive" and see a library of history. Our archive, though, is alive and fluid. It's a home where Salvatore Ferragamo's original designs and concepts commingle and inspire my own vision, a perfect balance between comfort and creativity. I want my creations to be modern, but also user-friendly. This is completely in line with Ferragamo's heritage, Salvatore was a genius, an artist. He had an unusual, highly personal feel for colour that worked well with the spirit of experimentation with which he approached every project for a new shoe. Salvatore spent years studying anatomy so that the wearability of his creations would always be guaranteed and never subordinated to the shoe's pure aesthetic value. This was an avantgarde philosophy, in which beauty was the result of a subtle negotiation between form and function.

Do you think men should dress in suits most of the time, and always to work?

There is some truth in the saying, "Clothes make the man," since they're



*Massimiliano Giornetti
wears head-to-toe custom
Ferragamo.*

a tool to communicate your personality. As for suits, of course, wear them according to your needs and occasion.

You've said that when you're designing a collection, you think of a character and then portray him from the ground up. Who is the character in your most recent collection?

An eclectic man who mixes his many interests, inspirations, and ideas. I imagined a globetrotter who loves different cultures and colours, and freely transmits his aesthetic experience through his personalised outfits. He wears the "everyday" with individuality, and purposely misaligned precision-cropped suits with colourful shirts and sharp graphic prints. He is not eccentric, but he has a touch of irony. Cactuses and monkeys whimsically adorn patches and embroidery.

Do you think clients worldwide are drawn to an idea about a lifestyle, even if subliminally, as much as they are to the clothes themselves?

I wish to communicate a lifestyle, an Italian lifestyle, that reflects the joy of life, based on the continuous search for beauty, harmony, and quality. A rhythm of living and enjoying small luxuries and habits that can transform your everyday life into something special. "*Savoir faire*" of manual work, expertise. Finding the time that is required to create and fully enjoy the small masterpieces that represent our collections. A lifestyle that reflects our history and tradition, but also a spirit of innovation and challenge, of art and science.

Let's say a man is young and building his career, and doesn't have a lot of extra money to spend on clothes. Do you believe in the "buy one, buy good" philosophy, investing in a few quality suits that will last and distinguish him? In his case, how many suits should he aspire to have in his closet?

I believe in quality and investing in craftsmanship; it's a very modern way of investing money. His wardrobe should build on a strong foundation and grow with precision. For sure a navy, perfectly tailored blazer, a white made-to-measure shirt, a beautiful cashmere sweater, a business suit, grey or blue, and a tuxedo. And, of course, a pair of handcrafted Ferragamo shoes.

In one interview, you mention Gianni Agnelli as a style icon, saying that his style wasn't purely sartorial, but had to do with his whole attitude. How would you describe that attitude, and is it reflected in your designs for men?

Gianni Agnelli was a man of an undisputed elegance. Maybe the most elegant man of his time. But the point is that he had such a strong personality that he could also change the dogmas of elegance, like wearing white socks with handmade shoes, or his watch above his shirt cuff. Anyone should adapt fashion to his own taste and personality, reinterpreting it. This is certainly always at the core of the man I design for, where a certain lifestyle is beyond his wardrobe.

People tend to associate glamour with women or with places. Can a man be glamorous, and have you tried to achieve that in the way you dress them?

Glamour describes the lifestyle of this man, not his outfit. Yet he plays his part in this glamorous role with impeccable tailoring complemented by bespoke style, exploring dichotomy as he plays with the rules of fashion. ■



Ferragamo training an apprentice.



Top and Bottom: Looks from the spring/summer 2016 collection.
Middle, from Left: A shoe created for Andy Warhol; a bag designed by Ferragamo in 1949.

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TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

New York City is devastated by an unknown pandemic, and society has collapsed into chaos. Basic services have failed, with food and water scarce, and scavengers having reduced the streets to dangerous war zones dominated by the corrupt.

Text by ANDRE COETZER

In steps, *The Division*, a classified unit of self-supported tactical agents, is trained to operate independently in order to save society. Welcome to the Big Apple, agent.

Welcome To The Concrete Jungle

Tom Clancy's *The Division* is the latest game from AAA developer Ubisoft, famed for their *Assassin's Creed* and *Far Cry* games.



The Division is best described as an online, 3rd-person action-shooter/RPG/MMO hybrid, set in an incredible 1:1 recreation of New York. You are tasked with saving society from the corruption that has beset the famous city, and cleaning up the streets of scum and villainy. But the biggest star in the game is the city itself. It is, hands down, one of the best recreations of New York ever seen in video games. From the snow-drenched streets of Manhattan, to the eerily empty Madison Square Garden, every corner of the city is a sight to behold, and you will find yourself constantly stopping to admire the sheer beauty of this virtual city. Of course, a well-rendered city alone does not make a good game; fortunately, *The Division* shines in every other department as well.

The City Needs A Hero

When *The Division* was initially announced, many were confused as to what exactly the gameplay would be like. Is it a massively multiplayer online game with 3rd-person shooting bits? Or is it an online role-playing game with 3rd-person shooting bits? Well, it's safe to say that it's all of the above and so much more. Yes, it is an always-online 3rd-person shooter with a massive city to explore. You get to collect loot to upgrade your character as well as your base of operations, which is the area where you get to upgrade your medical facilities, security base, and a few other surprises that will be left for you to discover on your own. The main mission in *The Division* can be played in co-op with friends or other online players, but it's mostly PvE (player versus environment). At the moment, there are 12 main missions to complete, as well as various procedurally generated missions that will spawn on your map as you traverse your way through the city. However, throughout the city, you will find areas called the Dark Zone; this is where the game truly excels.

The Unpredictability Of The Dark

The Dark Zone is the PvP (player versus player) area of *The Division*. A quarantined area found throughout New York that pits the various agents from around the world against each other. The most rare and valuable loot can be found in these areas, and it's up to the players to either team up, or go rogue to obtain these valuable assets. Only one person can extract these valuable items in specific extraction zones by calling in a helicopter, and this is when things get tense and exciting. This alerts all the other players in the world of your location, as well as the location of some valuable loot. This then creates a very tense few minutes, when even your own team members can turn rogue and steal your hard-earned assets. It's an exhilarating moment every time, creating such unique and exciting stories to tell. And that is what transforms this from a good game, into a great game.

Quarantine Has Never Been This Good

Overall, Tom Clancy's *The Division* is a fantastic game, and an early contender for Game of the Year. From the usual Tom Clancy futuristic gadgets and toys, to the backstabbing wonder of PvP, to the glorious New York setting, *The Division* has lived up to the early hype it created back in 2012. It's a true next-gen experience we've been waiting for, and a marvel in game creation. But, be aware, it's an always-online game, so make sure your internet connection is up to scratch. The expected release date for Tom Clancy's *The Division* is the 8th of March 2016. ■



FAR CRY PRIMAL

From the dry yet beautiful African landscapes, to the tropical Rook Islands in the Pacific Ocean, to the treacherous mountain peaks of the Himalayas, Ubisoft's Far Cry series has placed the player in some of the most enchanting locations around. Yet in 2016, we will see the biggest change to a Far Cry game. It's time to get primal.

Text by ANDRE COETZER



A New Age Stone Age

For the first time in the franchise history, *Far Cry* takes the player back in time into the savage and lawless Stone Age, where man and beast battle each other for survival. You play as Takkar, a seasoned hunter and the last surviving member of his tribe. Your goal? Survive in a world where you are the prey. The setting? Oros, a majestic and savage land with a breath-taking valley of redwood forests, harsh taiga, and humid swamps. Oros teems with life, from large herds of deer and vicious packs of dire wolves, to warring tribes. It's quite a major departure from the series' roots, as all modern-day weapons are long gone. It's you and your trusty spear and bow against some of the most dangerous animals from that period. But at its gameplay core, this is very much still a *Far Cry* game. It's still a first-person shooter, and you will still stalk the enemy outpost and attack either through stealth, or all-out assault. However, the key differences with *Far Cry Primal* are the actual beasts that hunt you.

Master Of Beasts

As Takkar, you will be able to tame the very predators that hunt you.

Each predator has its own unique abilities that will help you survive in this perilous world. With wolves warning you of danger nearby, to sabre-toothed tigers gathering resources after a kill, to bears destroying everything that stands in their way. Taming these predators is absolutely vital to surviving in your harsh surroundings. Of course, as per previous *Far Cry* games, there are key individuals you will meet during the course of your journey. Some will be friendly and helpful to your cause, and others will look to kill you as quickly as possible. And that's what sets *Far Cry Primal* apart from its predecessors. You never feel confident. It's a constant battle against the elements to survive, and it's fantastic fun.

Do The Evolution Baby

As always, *Far Cry Primal* looks fantastic, and it's a visual treat to traverse the numerous landscapes of Oros. The added element of the animal taming does just enough to keep the game fresh and exciting. If you were a fan of the previous *Far Cry* games, then you will love *Primal*. *Far Cry Primal* is available now on PS4, Xbox One, and PC. ■

STREET FIGHTER V

It's the return of the greatest fighting series in gaming history as Street Fighter V shoryukens its way onto the PS4 and PC. It's been 8 years since the genre-defining Street Fighter IV appeared on the last-gen consoles, and the highly anticipated return has fighting fans salivating at the prospect of once again perfecting their Hadoukens and Psycho Blasts.

Text by ANDRE COETZER



Crossplay Parry

The biggest talking point about the new *Street Fighter* iteration is that of console exclusivity. For the first time ever, *Street Fighter* will only be available on PlayStation 4 and PC. Great news for Sony fans, less so for Xbox and Nintendo fans. Another big announcement is that of crossplay, the ability for PC gamers to go head-to-head with PS4 gamers. It's fantastic news for all fight fans as this opens up a much larger group of players to humiliate in the grandest fighting arena. Of course, all this means nothing if the gameplay isn't up to scratch, and fortunately, it is.

V For Victory

The central mechanic in *Street Fighter IV* was the Focus Attack, an ability to absorb a hit, and unleash a counterattack. However, *Street Fighter V* does away with the Focus Attack and replaces it with a new V-Gauge, a small meter just above your super bar. The V-Gauge controls the various core mechanics like the V-Triggers, V-Skills, and V-Reversals. Simply put, a full V-Gauge is almost a necessity to come out victorious. If this all sounds far too intimidating for you, then don't worry. The magic of *Street Fighter* is that it caters to the button-mashing beginner as much as it does to the veterans. You will have just as much fun randomly pushing buttons as the Ultra-Combo-badass experts will. *Street Fighter V* is a blast to play no matter your skill level.

Familiar Faces

Of course, it wouldn't be a *Street Fighter* game without the regular cast



making an appearance. Series regulars like Ryu, Zangief, Chun-Li, and M. Bison all return to the fifth iteration, as well as series newbies Necalli, Rashid, Laura Matsuda, and the eccentric and dangerous F.A.N.G. All in all, there will be an initial cast of 16 fighters, more will be added on in the near future through free and paid DLC. Each fighter feels fantastically unique, from the speed and aggression of Ryu, to the slow and methodical power of Zangief. Each character will offer something unique and special to cater to every player's preferred fighting style.

The World Warriors

Graphically, *Street Fighter V* shares the same engine that *IV* used, but beefed up to current-gen specs. It's still such a unique and wonderful graphical look that simple screenshots do not do justice. It truly is a "see it to believe it" game. Once again, Capcom has delivered the ultimate fighting game, fantastic visuals, intriguing characters, and a fighting system that is out of this world. *Street Fighter V* is not only the best *Street Fighter* game, it's also the greatest fighting game ever created. *Street Fighter V* is available now on PS4 and PC. ■



Lt. Col. Brown with the Airborne Battalion of the Salvadoran Army, carrying a custom-built sniper rifle, in 1984.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILLIP GONZALES.

Mail-Order Mercenaries

Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Brown and his magazine, Soldier of Fortune, have long had the Second Amendment in sight.

Text by LUKAS I. ALPERT

After missing his 23rd straight shot, Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Brown is ready to call it a day. “Fuck me, I’ve had enough,” the founder of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine growls as he puts his brand-new Ruger Precision Rifle down on the table. “I definitely didn’t win any prizes today.”

Brown has been aiming for a 2-by-3-metre, painted metal silhouette of a white buffalo metres away, a distance greater than the length of 11 soccer fields, but keeps circling around the target as the wind shifts.

As he adjusts the brim of his red-and-black SOLDIER OF FORTUNE baseball cap forward on his bald head and gets to his feet, he turns to the motley crew of about a dozen old Army buddies, ex-CIA spooks, magazine contributors, and a few fans who have joined him for a weekend of shooting at the Whittington Centre, a National Rifle Association-owned gun range in Mexico, where Brown serves as a trustee. “Anyone else want to try this?”

One by one, members of the group take turns aiming at the white buffalo, almost all of them hitting the target in the first few shots. “Hey, Bob, you’re the only trustee who hasn’t hit it yet,” one of his pals jokes. “Any other comments, gentlemen?” Brown says. “You want polite ones?” “Just keep it to yourself, then.”

At 83 years old, the colonel seems like a feisty grandfather at first, wearing Ambervision glasses, temporary braces on both knees, white socks pulled halfway up his

calves, and hearing aids from years of being around loud, high-powered weaponry. But he is not a man to be messed with. By his count, he has seen action in more than a dozen conflicts around the world and been shot at more times than he can remember. With a pistol strapped to his belt whose custom grip is emblazoned with a U.S. flag and a bald eagle, Brown continues to work full-time from his home in Colorado, USA, publishing the magazine that celebrated its 40th anniversary late last year.

“Boulder is 65 square kilometres of hippy-dippy bullshit surrounded by reality. I come down here to cleanse my soul,” Brown tells me, the words coming out of his mouth in bursts like machine-gun fire. “You know what they say about the golden years? It’s bullshit.”

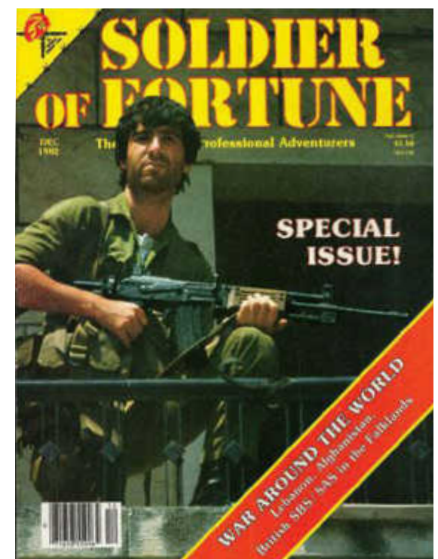
Dubbed “the Journal of Professional Adventurers,” *Soldier of Fortune* has, since 1975, chronicled a shifting, no-holds-barred world of black ops and mercenaries fighting Communism and terrorism. Its reporters have operated unlike most, carrying guns along with their pens and cameras, writing first-person accounts from battlefields around the world in what Brown likes to call “hard-core participatory journalism”.

“We would create the story, gin up a lot of action, and then write about it for the glistening pages of our bad-boy magazine,” is how he described it in his 2013 memoir, *I Am Soldier of Fortune: Dancing with Devils*.

In many cases, its writers really were mercenaries, and six *Soldier of Fortune*

correspondents have been killed in action over the years, in places like Angola, Nicaragua, Burma (now Myanmar), and Sierra Leone (where legend has it that the remains of reporter Robert C. MacKenzie were eaten by rebel fighters).

The small weekend gathering has effectively replaced the annual *Soldier of Fortune* conventions Brown held for two decades that used to draw hundreds of camouflage-clad war buffs to the desert for displays of military firepower, weapons, tactical training, and apparently quite a lot of drinking. Brown says the showcase demanded more manpower than his downsized



The December 1982 issue



**FIGHT
FOR
FREEDOM**

Afghanistan is very far away, and the mujahideen don't speak our language, but what they are fighting for speaks to each of us: the right to worship God as they think best, the right to run their own country, the right not to be butchered and shamed around by a foreign invader. They call it a holy war, and they need your help. They're not afraid to die, but without weapons, gun ammunition, courage is...

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Ads from Soldier of Fortune circa the 1980s ran the gamut from (clockwise from top) an armed-pinup poster and mail-order blowguns, to mercenary classifieds and calls to fight in Afghanistan.

magazine could staff, so he pulled the plug a few years back in favour of just spending time with his close friends.

Several members of his entourage have travelled hundreds, even thousands of kilometres to join the colonel for the weekend. Some he has known since his days in Special Forces in Vietnam, and others he has met on a variety of battlefields along the way. "The vast majority of the people I have been close to have had some involvement, in one way or another, with the magazine. Some of them have been with me in the shit, others I know because they have written for us, and then there are guys I've met in fighting for gun rights," he says. "They are an eclectic group."

While many of them have also known each other for years, the linchpin of the get together is undeniably the colonel, often referred to as RKB or Maximus by friends. His colourful personality commands attention and brings out a mixture of awe, respect, and genuine affection amongst the gang of pretty gruff guys. Perhaps the oldest pal in the group

is Robert Bernard, the Army medic who saved Brown's life back in 1969 when he was seriously wounded in a mortar attack in the central highlands of Vietnam. Known as "Bacsi" to his friends (which means "doctor" in Vietnamese), the soft-spoken Bernard still keeps a close eye on the colonel's health. "He hasn't always taken the best care of himself, so somebody has to look after him," the 77-year-old healer tells me, "He was the kind of guy you wanted as your CO in Vietnam, he really stuck his neck out for the people he was in charge of, and he is the kind of guy you want to have as your friend in life. Never a dull moment with him."

It was for guys like Bernard and his generation that Brown initially created *Soldier of Fortune*. When he launched the magazine, he had hoped to give something to the Vietnam vets who were coming home and finding themselves spat at and being called baby killers by anti-war peaceniks. "A lot of Vietnam veterans felt they weren't given their due, so I wanted to promote the concept of giving them recognition. We said our blood

was just as red as anyone who fought in WWI or WWII or Korea, but that wasn't the case in society at the time," Brown says.

Later the readership expanded to include a broader swath of military buffs, hard-core cold warriors, and a fair share of young men who would later join the armed forces inspired by the blood-and-guts tales of patriotic derring-do they had read in its pages. "It was reading *Soldier of Fortune* as a teenager that inspired me to join the Army. There are a lot of guys who will tell you that," says Jerry Kraus, a 50-year-old insurance agent and *Soldier of Fortune* field editor who has become the colonel's right-hand man of sorts, and drove down with him for the weekend. Brown says one of his most cherished mementos is a signed copy of Chris Kyle's *American Sniper*, in which the marksman (who was killed in 2013) thanks Brown in the dedication for inspiring him to join the military.

But the troubles faced by print publishers as readers increasingly move online, plus the question of how to keep a magazine relevant that was born in the days of the Cold War and is geared largely towards men who have long been collecting social security, has started to weigh on Brown. "Obviously we are nowhere near where we were during our heyday in the 1980s, but we bring in a little coin and cover costs," he says. Still, Brown now finds himself having to do much more of the work, as he is down to just an associate, two part-time editors, and a contract art director from a peak of about 50 employees in the early 1980s. That has made it hard for him to get out into the world and do what he loves to do most... fight. "You know, I just don't have the time. We used to have a lot of people running the place. It's hard to do all this with just a few people and still have the time to get out there. I may try to go to Ukraine or Kurdistan soon. I still have good contacts in both places," he says.

Despite the fundamental role *Soldier of Fortune* has played in his life ("It's as much an extension of me as *Playboy* is for the guy who walks around in his pyjamas all the time"), Brown says he has been negotiating to either bring in younger partners, or even sell the magazine altogether.

For 40 years, Brown has served as an inspirational figure for a particular brand of misfit, whether they were fighting for a cause or a price or just seeking a bit of adventure in various hot spots around the world. But as

time passed and the world changed, the colonel is the first to admit that the magazine's hard-charging ethos may not have the same impact today. "Vietnam veterans have gotten older and settled down. Some have died. The Rambo era, whatever that amorphous phase was, is no longer. Who knows what it was, but there was something there. Of course, the Cold War is over and granted we have the War on Terrorism, but it is not the same thing," he says, "We never would be able to do now what we were able to do back then."

In its early years, *Soldier of Fortune* regularly ran full-page recruitment ads for mercenaries willing to fight with the white supremacist government of Rhodesia against Communist-backed black guerrillas. That led some members of Congress to call for the magazine to be investigated for possibly violating the Neutrality Act, a law that limits the U.S.' involvement in future wars (the magazine was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing).

Editorially, the magazine focused heavily on war stories and first-person dispatches, with correspondents jetting off to fight in and write about wars in the far corners of the globe. Issues in the 1970s featured regular reports on the situation in places like Rhodesia and Angola. As the 1980s rolled around, the focus moved to Central America's bloody wars and the fight between the Mujahideen and the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. In the 1990s, the focus became increasingly domestic, with an onslaught of pro-Second Amendment articles critical of the Clinton administration and its gun control efforts. The next decade the magazine turned to tales from the War on Terror and on efforts to control America's borders.

While it is unflinchingly pro-military and pro-police, the magazine is also deeply suspicious of government overreach, which has also made it popular amongst anti-government types. The magazine continues to focus on similar themes, but battlefield articles are now less often written by the ragtag group of fighter-journalists that set the magazine apart years ago. The June issue had a long feature story on South African mercenaries ("mercs" in *Soldier of Fortune* lingo) who were going to Nigeria to fight the radical Islamist fighters of Boko Haram, but the piece was reprinted from a website that publishes academic articles. A first-person account of embedding with Kurdish Peshmerga fighters battling ISIS in Iraq was

similarly reprinted from a conservative political website.

At its height, the magazine sold around 150 000 copies on newsstands each month (the biggest seller, at 182 000 copies, was the June 1985 issue, whose cover featured a shot of a shirtless Sylvester Stallone firing an M60 machine gun from the film *Rambo: First Blood Part II*). Sales have varied widely over the years, usually seeing spikes when the U.S. got into a war. Brown says it was always difficult to have an accurate sense of how many people read the magazine, because a single copy might get passed around within an entire platoon. He declines to discuss the current circulation, and the magazine isn't independently audited. He acknowledges being "technologically illiterate," but says he has been getting help improving *Soldier of Fortune's* antiquated website and presence on social media. "My lady friend is the one who has the better knowledge of what goes on on Facebook and the website. We had a lot of bad experiences with people helping us try to build the website, and all of them turned out to either be inferior or incompetent," he says. "We have been growing online. On Facebook we now have more than 850 000 likes."

Licensing has also proved lucrative over the years, with the magazine's name being used for a successful video-game series, a short-lived television show, and a number of military-themed novels.

Perhaps the clearest change has been the advertising. At the beginning, *Soldier of Fortune* featured scores of classified listings for itinerant guns-for-hire. In the 1980s and early '90s, the magazine spent years battling several multimillion-dollar lawsuits brought by families of people targeted or killed by hit men who had been hired through its pages. All were either settled, or had their huge jury awards overturned on appeal. "They really tried the magazine, not the cases. Two guys meet through the magazine, they have a friendly relationship for six months, they don't talk about anything illegal. But then six months later, they agree to commit this horrendous crime. Well, if they meet in a bar and six months later they say, 'Let's rob a bank,' should the bartender be held liable? It was total crap," he says.

Regardless, the magazine stopped taking those kinds of ads in 1985. But its classifieds continued to offer everything from throwing stars and nunchuks, to posters of G. Gordon Liddy holding an Uzi. Ads now tend to be

"The magazine is Bob, and Bob is the magazine. It would never be the same without him."

more like what one might expect in any gun magazine, marketing handguns, rifles, hunting apparel, and gun accessories. In the early 1980s, the magazine regularly topped 110 pages. By the mid-2 000s, it had dropped to 82. In recent years, the number has dwindled to 64. "This has never been just a moneymaking venture for me," Brown says, "If it had been, I would have made a lot more."

Over the years, the colonel routinely sank his largesse back into financing whatever mission the magazine had embarked on. He says he personally spent more than \$300 000 (about R5 million) backing efforts to hunt for POWs he and many of his readers believed had been left behind after the Vietnam War. "And that was 30 years ago," he notes. The magazine regularly advertised big-ticket rewards to anyone willing to turn over proof that the Vietnamese had used chemical weapons, or to Nicaraguan pilots ready to hand over an intact Soviet-built helicopter.

It also helped raise money for the Mujahideen fighters that years later morphed into the Taliban, and helped give rise to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. Brown has said that based on the information he had at the time, he felt he had made the right decision. Even if the magazine no longer has the cultural reach it once did, Brown's friends worry about the colonel no longer being involved. "The magazine is Bob, and Bob is the magazine. It would never be the same without him," says Gordon Hutchinson, a firearms instructor and author who has known the colonel for a decade. "We would never be the same without him. We can't have that."

After a long day of shooting long-range rifles, shotguns, semiautomatic weapons, and a Civil War-era, muzzle-loaded sniper rifle called "the Heavy," the colonel suggests the group drive to Cimarron, Mexico, to have dinner at the 144-year-old St. James Hotel.

MILITARY

Steeped in Wild West history, the hotel was once a regular stop-off point for outlaws like Jesse James.

To those who don't know him well, it's easy to assume Brown is a posturing octogenarian who never outgrew an adolescent obsession with big toys. But as he holds court at the dining table, he reveals a more subtly charismatic side, flirting innocently with the waitress and hostess and commanding the attention of all those gathered around. "Bob is one of those guys who, when he walks into a room, everyone kind of turns around. He'll doff his cap to a lady. He's almost European in his courtliness and manners, like a real officer and a gentleman," Hutchinson says, "You don't meet a ton of people like that." Brown is deeply conservative, but says he generally doesn't like talking politics.

At one point in the evening, the colonel pulls me aside to make sure I see the bullet holes that pock the tin ceiling of the restaurant's saloon, the indelible marks of more than a few drunken Old West gun fights. "Hard to find that kind of living history," he says, "I don't really drink anymore. Believe me, I've done enough drinking for a lifetime as it is." Still, the colonel has made a point of leaving his sidearm in the car. Brown tells me he has been married and has kids from whom he is estranged, but that he doesn't want to talk about them. "I'm just not going there."

When the colonel goes to pay his tab he discovers that it, along with the dinner bills of several of the old-timers in the group, has already been paid by Bruce Roberts, a fan of the magazine. A security guard for a gas facility, Roberts had never met Brown before this weekend, but hit it off with him when they corresponded over the purchase of a military history book from his collection. "It's just an honour to be around him. He's really a legend. I read the magazine going back to when I was a teenager, and I feel like I know all these guys. It's amazing to meet them," he says. After the party breaks up, Brown comes back to my car to retrieve his gun, as he plans to ride back with someone else. As he walks off, Brown puts his arm around the shoulders of Harry Claflin, a long-time pal who spent many years in the 1980s training American government troops in El Salvador in their war against Communist rebels. "Thanks, buddy, for coming out for a good time, there won't be many more of these. You know, life's a bitch and then you die."

The next morning, Brown tries to get



Brown (right, on horse) in Soldier of Fortune, with the team of vets who trained the Contras' special ops unit.

everyone together for a group photo before shooting a round of trap. "It's like fucking herding cats!" he yells as the group mills about. Once everyone lines up with their shotguns, Brown suggests they hold up a shell in their free hand in a way that makes it look like they're flipping the bird to the camera. "That's right. The Wild Bunch rides again," he says, referring to the classic, 1969 Western that is his favourite film.

Brown, who has sat on the NRA's (National Rifle Association) board of directors for three decades, then departs for a business meeting. "You boys are on your own. Have fun shooting." Brown says he came up with the idea for the magazine while travelling in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) when it was under white-government rule and was enlisting mercenaries to fight Communist-backed guerrilla forces.

He was told several of the fighters were headed to Oman after their tours to put down an insurrection. Out of curiosity, Brown wrote to Oman's ministry of defence, which sent him a contract. Rather than sign up, Brown took out ads in gun magazines, "Want to be a mercenary in the Middle East? Send \$5 (about R80)." In return, he'd send the contract. "I got scores of replies," Brown says, "Newsweek spotted this and did an article on my ad, and it just went through the roof. I was getting replies from people in Bangladesh, Greece. 'I was in the army in Turkey for five years; I want to be a mercenary.' I realised I was onto something." With the money, *Soldier of Fortune* was born.

But it's guys such as Claflin, who worked with the likes of Oliver North in helping fight against Communism in Central America, that have given rise to theories that the magazine's origins might have been less organic. In a 1984 article in *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, leftist firebrand writer Ward Churchill argued that *Soldier of Fortune* was actually an elaborate CIA front geared towards organising private soldiers to fight the U.S.' battles in the period after the Vietnam War, when committing American troops abroad was politically problematic. Churchill noted that for years before the magazine launched, Brown regularly found himself in the middle of situations where the CIA played a role. Churchill also pointed to the fact that many of the magazine's writers had long been suspected of ties to the intelligence community. Brown has two words for Churchill's theory, "Utter bullshit."

What's not bullshit is that the necessity for highly trained, but underemployed soldiers to advertise their wares or otherwise beat the bushes to find gigs has declined in recent years as the process has become more corporatized. Governments and companies working in troubled parts of the world can now simply turn to big private-security firms, like the company once known as Blackwater, which have rosters of such men at the ready. Additionally, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the market got flooded by scores of well-trained fighters with little to do. That, coupled with the magazine's aging readership, has resulted in an audience that is perhaps more armchair quarterback than active combatant.

Brown has increasingly focused his energy in recent years on the struggle over gun rights, and the magazine has sometimes resembled more of an NRA soapbox than a pure military review. Yet he still tells friends that he has plenty of fight left in him. "When I last saw the colonel, he told me, 'You know, I think I still have one more good war in me,'" Hutchinson recalls, "I just looked at him and said, 'Bob, are you crazy? You've been in every skirmish, large and small, including some really stupid ones, going back to Korea. Why don't you give it a rest?' But honestly, I think the day he gives it up is the day he dies."

As the weekend festivities wrap up and everyone is preparing for the long trip home, Brown tells me that no matter what happens, he isn't worried. "You'll always stay relevant as long as you can shoot a gun." ■

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PRETTY FUNNY

"More than just a pretty face," a hackneyed, and often failed, phrase that model and budding comedian CJ Franco is ringing true.

*Text by FARAI MAKONI Photography by RYAN DWYER
Booked by MAINSTREET PRODUCTIONS*

You're a super confident woman, you have the right to be. Have you always been super-confident?

I've always been confident. It's important to believe in yourself and be 100% behind your decisions. I have never been one to follow the crowd, and I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Overcoming adversity and going against the grain definitely has its challenges, but it made me a super-tough cookie (but still delicious).

Would you say you're rather conceited, to an extent?

I would never say that! One of my favourite things to do is make new friends. I literally talk to everyone I meet, I mean, I had a 20-minute conversation with a 70-year-old woman about her dating life while I was getting coffee. I find people absolutely fascinating, and I like to listen and learn from others. I make friends with the people who work at all the local shops, and spend my days distracting them at work. Being humble and open-minded is more my flow.

What would you be doing right now if you weren't modelling?

I would be a high-powered businesswoman, in a sexy, all-white, chic business ensemble, verbally abusing most of my employees, and possibly sleeping with my Latino pool boy.

What's a normal day for you?

I have my coffee and make the most amazing smoothies anyone has ever made... ever. Raspberry mint, shut up, so good! I have my own company, Neon Beige, so I work on different parts of that, a lot of meetings and angry phone calls. I try to work on my comedy every day with another comedian, and we record our sessions, which is actually so much fun. I do photo shoots probably 3 times a week, take over Snapchat accounts, and do my shenanigans on social media. I really like sending my boyfriend wildly unattractive pics, and generally harassing him throughout my day. I go to comedy classes, take my dogs out, act like an overbearing dog mom, blast my ghetto music... just the usual stuff.

Tell us something strange about you that not many people know?

I'm a comedian! I guess my life is a little bit different than most people's, and I have the craziest stories, so stand-up comedy has become my outlet (or therapist). Comedy really gives me the opportunity to laugh at myself and rant about my private life without people taking me too seriously. I have been attending Upright Citizens Brigade (comedy school), and in my spare time, I have meetings with comedians and social media celebs, and work on skits and new material.

How much of a role does Instagram play when it comes to pushing your career?

Social media in general has an enormous influence when it comes to

modelling. I am such a silly person, but the content on my Instagram is mostly targeted at catering to my followers, or promoting my modelling. I have been working with ArsenicTV to steer my social media more towards comedy, Amanda and Billy are social media ninjas. @Lisabise is my handle for all my social media, so for some strange reason, people keep calling me "Lisa".

A lot of celebrities complain about having their lives put under a microscope, tabloids, paparazzi. Is it really that bad?

It depends. If I am looking cute while doing respectable things, I don't care. Realistically, that is rarely the case. Now, let's say I'm looking like Sasquatch while trying to nurse a hangover... horrific photos of "model CJ Franco" blasted across the Internet can really put a damper on an otherwise mediocre day.

What's the most ridiculous story you've heard about yourself?

I mean, it's all true (*laughs*). No, I think all this gossip is pretty funny. Allegedly, I have like 7 professions, and as I'm reading these articles, I feel like I am learning new things about myself. I'm actually pretty impressed, like, where do I find the time to do all of these jobs? One thing I would like to point out is that not one tabloid has even acknowledged that I am a single mother to two small dogs.

It must be difficult dating normal guys who aren't used to your lifestyle?

Guys are difficult in general! I swear, I am halfway to becoming a lesbian, did you hear that, Ellen? Jokes aside, I loathe dating; when my life is so public, I would rather not deal with any extra mumbo jumbo.

What do you generally look for in a guy? If you were at a bar, what would draw you to a guy across the room?

I have never been into dating or getting hit on in bars. I'm drawn to guys who are friendly, the kind of guy that will talk to the door guy for 20 minutes. Funny, sweet, charming guys are my thing. Oh, and guys that are NOT dealing with some sort of juicy scandal.

What plans do you have for 2016?

I'm launching my clothing line Neon Beige, which is cheeky athletic wear. I started this company almost 2 years ago, when I was taking business class at university. I design workout gear for the girl that probably didn't make it to the gym... she's probably at Starbucks, or looking causally hot for "Netflix and chill". I couldn't find an entire athletic wear line that was fitted and sexy, so I created it. Aside from Neon Beige, I plan to do more stand-up comedy. Let's just hope that I don't get myself in any (more) trouble this year!





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Creative by JODIE GRAVES Photography by CHARLEMAGNE OLIVIER





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Bracelet, VITALY R899.*



Suit, TIGER OF SWEDEN R12 699;
Shirt, TIGER OF SWEDEN R2 199;
Shoes, EUROPA ART R2 490;
Watch, CORUM R128 000.



Suit, TIGER OF SWEDEN R12 699;
Shirt, TIGER OF SWEDEN R2 199;
Watch, CORUM R128 000.



*Shirt, TIGER OF SWEDEN R2 199;
Pants, SCOTCH & SODA R1 999;
Shoes, ZARA R1 199.*



Shirt, H&M R229;
Bag, ZARA R899;
Watch, ULYSSE NARDIN R175 000.



*Shirt, TIGER OF SWEDEN R2 199;
Watch, NOMOS R70 000.*



*Pants, ZARA R999;
Watch, BELL & ROSS
R114 000; Bag, ZARA R999;
Shoes, COUNTRY ROAD R1 299.*



*Belt and Pants, ZARA R699;
Watch, BELL & ROSS
R49 000; Shirt, H&M R229.*



*Pants, ZARA R999;
Shoes, TIGER OF SWEDEN
COGNAC R7 199.*

SIN CITY

Curated by JACQUELINE MIRÓ



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THE MEN WHO MADE VEGAS

Much like Rome, Las Vegas wasn't built in a day.

Text by JACK SHEEHAN

Unlike the gamblers who seeded its meteoric rise, Las Vegas has overcome the odds consistently for 70 years. Once an outpost in the desert controlled by organised crime, rumoured to have removed truckloads of uncounted cash from casinos in the still of the night, today an acre of the 6-kilometre-long Strip is worth \$10 million (about R165 million). Tourism numbers are at all-time highs.

The roll call of men who built Las Vegas dates back to the 1940s and '50s, when shady characters like Meyer Lansky, Moe Dalitz, and Benny Binion became infatuated with the possibilities of settling in the only legal gambling centre in the country, and developing a seedy adult getaway. In the 1960s, it was billionaire Howard Hughes and banker E. Parry Thomas who made things happen. Then visionaries Michael Milken, Kirk Kerkorian, and Steve Wynn raised the bar again in the 1970s. These men, who make up an A-list of gaming leaders, were as diverse and colourful as the gambling palaces they built and managed. Following are some of the extraordinary circumstances that allowed a dusty outpost in the middle of nowhere to become one of the brightest spots on Earth. It is by any measure remarkable that just 70 years after hotels were first constructed there, the city is considered one of the top tourist destinations in the world, and home to 614 000 residents who lead remarkably normal lives.

Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel

The construction of the Hoover Dam between 1931 and 1935, and the outbreak of World War II were essential to the Las Vegas Strip's growth. Preceded by a few watering holes and casinos in downtown Las Vegas in the '30s and '40s, the Flamingo Hotel, which opened in 1946, gave birth to what we now know as the Strip, and was home to both mafia boss Meyer Lansky, and on-site operator Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. It is said that sharp gamblers took so much money off the gaming tables on opening weekend that the hotel had to shut down for three months before reopening. Just three months later, Bugsy was murdered in his girlfriend's Beverly Hills home, making way for other lieutenants in the Lansky crime family to sweep into Las Vegas and take over management of the hotel. Thus started a 25-year stretch in which most of the new resorts built along the Las Vegas Strip had disguised ownership by members of organised crime.

Howard Hughes and E. Parry Thomas

No event throughout the 1960s had more impact on the future of Las Vegas than the arrival of Howard Hughes on Thanksgiving weekend

1966. Originally intending to stay just three weeks in the city he had frequented as a bachelor years before, Hughes settled into the recently remodelled ninth floor of Moe Dalitz's Desert Inn, with a full security staff occupying that floor and the one below. The billionaire soon found that he was very comfortable there and refused to move out over the Christmas holidays to make room for the inn's high-rolling gamblers. Dalitz was irate and threatened to have him physically evicted. Banker E. Parry Thomas advised Hughes that the only way he would be able to remain at the Desert Inn was to purchase the hotel and proceeded to cast his wide net of influence, finally convincing Dalitz to sell to Hughes. The transaction was completed in June 1967, and once the billionaire realised there were tax incentives to putting his vast savings into active investments, he encouraged Thomas to "play Monopoly" and buy up several other hotels on the Strip. Over the next two years, Hughes added the Sands, the Frontier, the Silver Slipper, the Castaways, and the Landmark to his portfolio.

Although Hughes quietly ended his seclusion in Las Vegas in 1970, departing four years to the day after his arrival, and never built a single thing while he was there, his symbolic impact on the city was immense. His acquisitions signalled to the outside world that if an entrepreneur of his stature and mystique was willing to pour that much money into the hotel-casino business, perhaps there was some legitimacy to the town and the gambling industry.

Kirk Kerkorian

While Hughes was still ensconced at the Desert Inn, his friend Kirk Kerkorian also had big plans for Las Vegas. Kerkorian had purchased 80 acres on the Strip in 1962 for just under a million dollars (about R16 million), and had leased it to developer Jay Sarno to build Caesars Palace. Kerkorian then sold the land outright to Caesars for \$9 million (around R149 million) in 1968. One year later, Kerkorian opened the International Hotel on Paradise Road, at the time the largest hotel in the world, with almost 1 600 rooms. To fill his massive, 1 600-seat showroom, he brought in two of the biggest names in entertainment, Elvis Presley and, later, Barbra Streisand. Presley would go on to become the hottest ticket in Las Vegas until his death in 1977. He not only sold out the showroom every night, but also packed the casino with high-rolling gamblers.

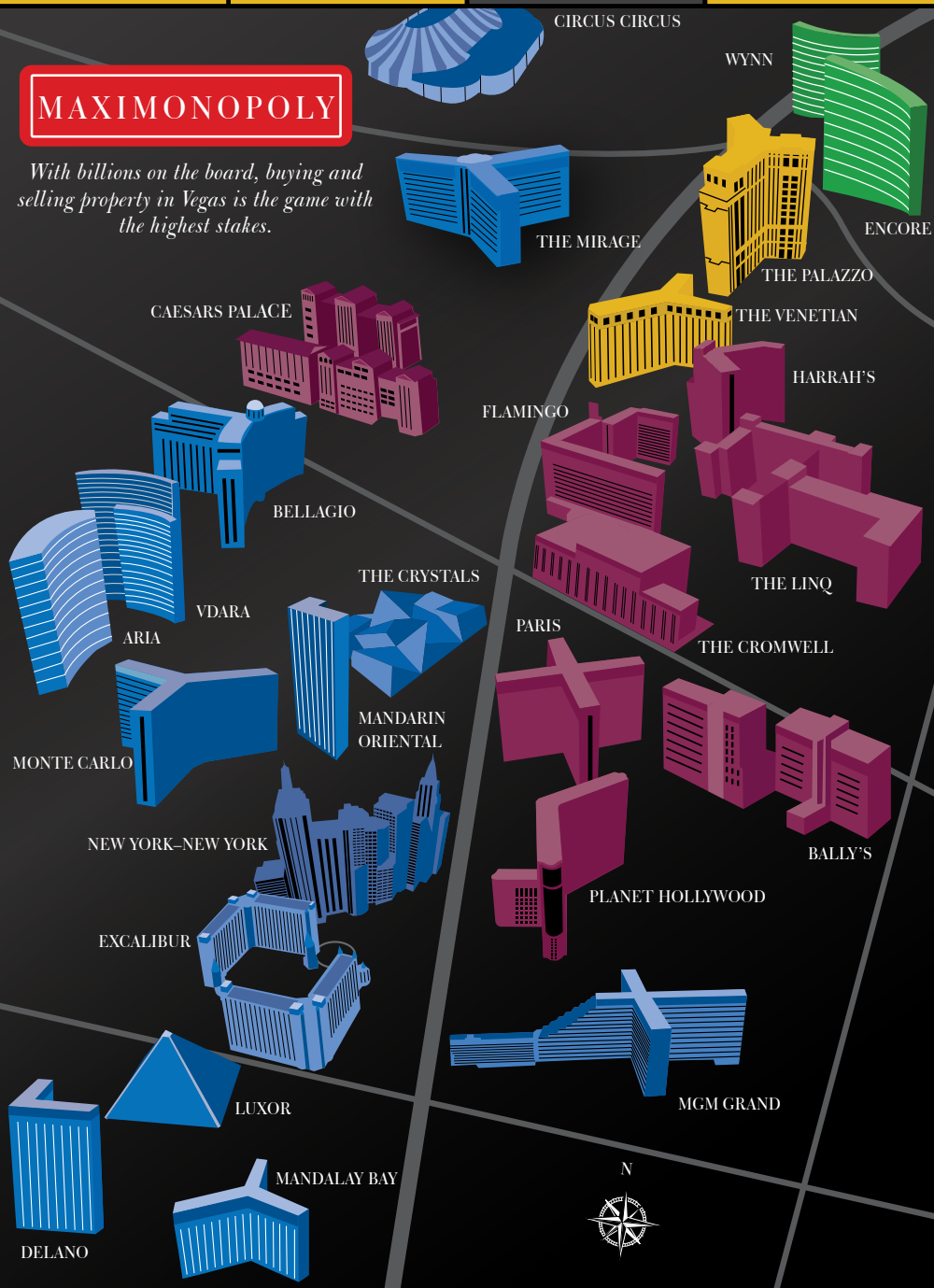
In the past two decades, many mergers and acquisitions have resulted in MGM Resorts International and Caesars Entertainment having the deepest portfolios of holdings. Between them, the companies own 23 hotel and casino properties in Las Vegas, and both

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THE PALAZZO
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ARIA
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THE CRYSTALS

have numerous other national and international holdings.

There are two other gaming giants whose shadows loom large over the city, Sheldon Adelson, of Las Vegas Sands Corp., and Steve Wynn, of Wynn Resorts. While those two billionaires don't own as many Las Vegas properties as MGM and Caesars, they have garnered more individual attention than the others for their business and political move.

Sheldon Adelson

A self-made billionaire, Adelson was ranked as the 15th Wealthiest American on *Forbes* magazine's 2015 list, with a net worth of \$26 billion (R429 billion). Adelson was raised from humble beginnings in the neighbourhood of Boston, USA; his family was of Ukrainian-Jewish descent. From his boyhood start selling newspapers, to operating vending machines, developing condominiums, and helping small businesses go public, Adelson worked his way up to hosting trade shows. For years, he ran and managed a high-tech convention in Las Vegas called Comdex. Some locals referred to the annual gathering of more than 100 000 high-tech convention delegates as "Revenge of the Nerds," but the conference was a terrific boon to the city's economy. Adelson sold his convention business in 1995 for \$862 million (R14 billion), and having watched entrepreneurs like Wynn and smaller operators make their fortunes in the gaming and tourism business, he decided that would be his next bold move.

Many critics scoffed at the decision, opining that Adelson would be a Johnny-come-lately to a gaming industry that required years of seasoning and experience. Like Wynn did years earlier, he would prove them wrong. In 1989, he bought an iconic Strip property, the Sands Hotel, where the ghosts of the Rat Pack still lingered.

It was during the year before the 1960 presidential election that Sinatra and friends, known as the Rat Pack, were performing together onstage at the Sands Hotel. These unscripted performances, which would often start with Frank or Dean singing a song as though it were a one-person act, would turn into joke fests as one by one the other members of the Pack sauntered onstage to sing, dance, or make jokes. The height of the Rat Pack's popularity came in 1960, when they starred in the film *Ocean's 11*, with a fantastic plot about ripping off a major casino. The atmosphere at the Sands was so high-spirited that on many nights Sinatra and Martin would enter the blackjack pit and deal live action to hotel guests. They would even coach gamblers on whether to hit or stand, and if their advice proved wrong, they would pay off a losing hand anyway.

Adelson tore down the Sands and built a tribute to the Italian city where he had proposed to his wife, Miriam. The Venetian opened in 1999 next to the Sands Expo and Convention Centre. Like his Strip neighbour Wynn, Adelson added a sister property to the Venetian when he opened the Palazzo in 2008.

Steve Wynn

No one individual is more responsible for the glamour and essence of current-day Las Vegas than Wynn. From his start in 1967 as a minority owner of the Frontier Hotel, Wynn has pulled off one masterstroke after another, becoming the principal stockholder of the downtown Golden Nugget casino in 1973, at just 31 years of age. More than a decade

later, he transformed the small property into the jewel of downtown with junk-bond financing from his Wall Street friend Michael Milken. Wynn's boldest Las Vegas move came in 1989. Again with Milken's funding, and with the counsel of long-time power broker E. Parry Thomas, he shifted his attention to the Las Vegas Strip, where he built the Mirage for R12 billion. Despite the warnings of many gaming-industry analysts who decried the property as a sure loser and said Wynn would need to reap R16 million a day from the casino, restaurants, and rooms to stay afloat, Wynn didn't blink. And in fact, the Mirage did much better than that. Not only was it a business success, but the resort also significantly raised the bar for hotel elegance and amenities. With a R215 million, regularly erupting volcano fronting the property, features like a dolphin pool and a white tiger habitat, and illusionists Siegfried & Roy packing his showroom, Wynn's new creation instantly surpassed Caesars Palace as the most luxurious resort in town. The same month the hotel opened, Wynn introduced Shadow Creek Golf Club to his select list of celebrity friends and high-rolling gamblers. Within four years, the course was rated amongst the 10 best in the world. But Wynn wouldn't rest for long on those laurels. As he said in an early-1990s interview, "My biggest thrill as a developer is planning these resorts and adding all those 'wow' elements that people will enjoy. But after the opening, and watching the excitement of our customers, I'm ready to move on to another challenge."

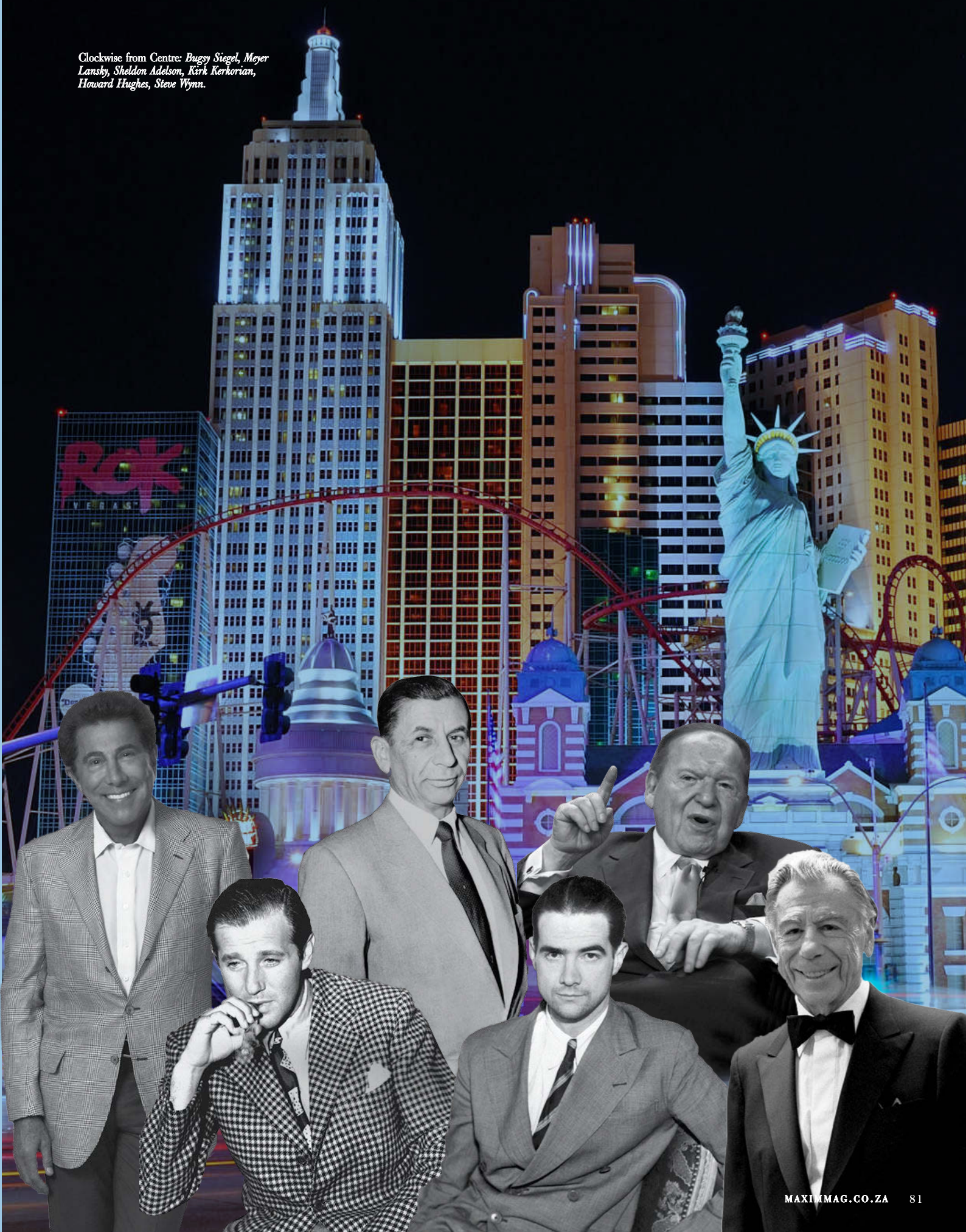
He would do just that in building Treasure Island Hotel and Casino, offering pavement strollers on the Strip a free show in which pirates and barely-clad sirens waged a nightly battle, complete with booming cannons. It was Las Vegas hype and kitsch at its finest. Wynn topped himself again in 1998, when he built Bellagio, named after a village in Italy, and critics hailed it the equal of European culture and class. Once again, he fronted the hotel with a spectacle, a majestic dancing fountain accompanied by music from the likes of Frank Sinatra and Andrea Bocelli.

Having poured his entire career and artistic energy into elevating Las Vegas from a town of neon-covered boxes, to luxurious resorts that architectural critics praised, Wynn shocked the gaming world in 2000 by selling his entire portfolio of Las Vegas hotels to Kirk Kerkorian's MGM Grand, for a price tag of \$6.4 billion (R105 billion).

Just weeks before that deal closed, Wynn had purchased the historic Desert Inn for \$270 million (R4 billion). Five months later, he tore it down, and today that site is home to his self-named Wynn Las Vegas and its sister property, Encore. Both resorts feature five-star restaurants, big-name stars and acts in their showroom, and nightclubs that bring huge revenues to the bottom line. The megadeal between Wynn and Kerkorian aligned visionaries from different eras. Kerkorian was 83 when the deal was consummated, and he stayed highly active behind the scenes of the Strip until his death last June, at 98. Wynn admired the entrepreneur greatly. Kerkorian had, over the years, owned a charter airline company and the MGM movie studio, and was a major shareholder in both Chrysler and General Motors. He had built the largest hotels in the world in Las Vegas, the International in 1969 (which later became the Las Vegas Hilton), the original MGM Grand in 1973 (which was damaged in a fire in 1980, claiming 85 lives), and the second MGM Grand in 1993. ■

An interview with Steve Wynn follows.

Clockwise from Centre: *Bugsy Siegel, Meyer Lansky, Sheldon Adelson, Kirk Kerkorian, Howard Hughes, Steve Wynn.*





Titan PLAY TO WYNN

*A conversation with the man responsible
for modern-day Vegas.*



Steve Wynn was the oldest child of Mike and Zelma Wynn. His father, a bingo-parlour operator, took a 10-year-old Steve to Las Vegas to open a new venture above the Silver Slipper casino. The business failed quickly, muscled out by a heftier competitor called the Golden Nugget. The trip wasn't lost on young Steve Wynn, though.

Wynn went on to attend the U.S. University of Pennsylvania with aspirations of becoming a doctor, took business classes elsewhere, and worked in his father's bingo parlour on Sundays. Mike Wynn's sudden death devastated his son, who dropped his own plans and took over his father's business.

That's when Vegas came calling. Wynn made his first investment in the Frontier, a new resort on the Strip, in 1967. By 1973, at the age of 31, he owned 400 000 shares, and was elected president and chairman of the Golden Nugget, the same establishment that had crushed his father's short-lived attempt to get a foothold in Vegas years earlier.

For Wynn, Vegas was about connections, risk, playing big, and thinking beyond the gambling business to the much larger game of resorts and destinations. He built for the child in everyone with an uncanny feel for the next big thing. In the decades since Wynn has been the major player, Vegas has developed its scope from casinos and entertainment, to being a destination with some of the best restaurants, spectacles, nightclubs, and shopping in the world. And Wynn has been at the forefront of all these expansions. His prescient investments in Macao casinos right before the crash of 2008 helped steer Las Vegas through the tough years that followed.

Wynn has said, "Being visionary just means you know where the market wants to go five minutes before the next guy." Those five minutes have, in large part, created the Vegas we know today.

Jack Sheehan interviews the man who can see the future.

You've been shaping the Las Vegas landscape for 40 years. Do you ever take the time to reflect on what has happened here?

Last night I was showing part of the hotel (Wynn Las Vegas) to some people, and I went up in the lift in the mountain at the Lake of Dreams. Then I immediately went down underwater in the lighting booth, under the showroom of Le Rêve, to see what was going on there. I had never done that before. I started to observe the miraculous things that are done to pull this all off, and the divers and how busy they were while the show was on. It dawned on me what incredible and complicated places these are that we've designed and built. I'm not one to reflect for long on that, though. I love the process that created these places, and that's all I care about. Once a property or challenge is completed, I'm always anxious to move on to the next one. On those occasions when I'm riding down the Strip, I will sometimes lament how ugly some of the places are, and I'm disappointed when someone does a bad job with a property. Without picking on anyone,

Text by JACK SHEEHAN

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I've been more disappointed through the years with the competitors and their lack of imagination and taste than I've been impressed with my own work.

What's your read on the Las Vegas economy as we begin 2016?

Let me ask you the same question I ask my board of directors when we're meeting, do you think there's any doubt that for the next 10 or 20 years Las Vegas will be a major destination, with its 160 000 hotel rooms and its infrastructure?

I think that's a safe bet.

My approach to solving problems and answering complicated questions is to back up until I get to a simple truth that there's no doubt about. Then I go forward one step at a time. Now, we know why people come to Las Vegas, don't we? They come to live large, to do something they can't do at home. To have a wild experience, like kids going to Disneyland. That's a simple truth. We know historically that the town has always gone to the showmen, whoever gave the people what they wanted has been a winner here. So the town goes to the showmen, people come here to live big, and they will stay in that frame of mind as we go forward. The answer to the question is that the economy of Las Vegas will remain as it's always been, either very strong, weak, or troubled, but the best joints in town will make whatever money is left. This is a real safe place to go forward if you know your business and have the capital. But be aware that this is no place for short money.

You've spoken often about the sadness of losing your father when you were just 21, and how that redirected the course of your life. I imagine you reflect often about what it would mean for him to see the success you've enjoyed.

Both my parents were raised in single-parent households. My mother, Zelma, never really knew her father much, and my father's mother died when he was a year old, in the influenza epidemic. While neither of my parents had a bad childhood, you could say they were underprivileged. When I was 10 years old, my father brought me to Las Vegas with him for two weeks, and his father, Jake Weinberg, came over to see his son and grandson. As an old vaudevillian, Jake danced with some of the showgirls that were performing in the Minsky Revue on top of the Silver Slipper casino. My father recorded the dancing with a 16-millimetre Bell & Howell camera. It was a riot. My old man had, years earlier, at age 18, wanted to get a job with Coca-Cola, as a sign painter, but they wouldn't hire Jews during the Depression. So he used the name of Ed Wynn, a popular comedian who was Keenan Wynn's father. Eventually, he legally changed our last name to Wynn. With the new name, he got the job with Coca-Cola, painting signs for billboards, and at night painting signs for the Revere, bingo parlour, which is how he got into the bingo business. Years later, our company is number two on the cover of *Fortune* magazine as a Most Admired company in America, behind Coca-Cola. At the awards event, the CEO Summit, they were all there, Microsoft, Warren Buffett, Ralph Larsen of Johnson & Johnson, all those people. I met the CEO of Coke, a Cuban immigrant named Roberto Goizueta, and he had a thick Cuban accent, like Al Pacino in *Scarface*. I told him the story of my father working as a sign painter for Coca-Cola. Until he died of cancer, Roberto remained my friend. We've always served Coke products at Wynn, and last year, to honour us, on 24 000 bottles of Classic Coke they printed "WYNN LAS VEGAS, 10TH ANNIVERSARY". Can you imagine, to a Depression kid, if I could show

my father a Coke bottle with his name on it, what a juxtaposition of fate that would be? You talk about one kick in the arse; that would take the cake.

When you speak to bright, young people, and they ask you the inevitable questions about achieving success or being entrepreneurial, what do you tell them?

I've noticed that it's almost impossible to anoint anybody, as much as you wish you could. That drive, that desire to accomplish something, and being dissatisfied with the status quo, having your eyes on something that you want to do and figuring out a thousand different ways to break the code or find the door in when all the rest are locked, that seems to be a personality trait that is inherent in the person. Incidentally, when I meet a young person who has that trait, it stands out like a sore thumb. Now, there is an endless list of kids who want to be entrepreneurial, but whether they have it or not is something that's probably already been decided. The biggest revelation I can share with these people, which applies to almost every business, is that I've found that money alone doesn't make ordinary people behave in extraordinary ways, which is what leadership is about. The secret of real, unbelievable performance is to somehow equate people's enhanced self-esteem to something that happens on the job. It's demonstrating to employees that working at the company means they belong to a club that's hard to join, that it's a point of pride. Everybody likes being number one. *Condé Nast Traveler* informed us recently that, for the ninth year in a row, their readers' poll selected the Wynn as the best hotel in Las Vegas. That's real important to my employees, because our people who work here love the idea that this is the best place. And that attracts the kind of people who care about stuff like that, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe it was 1982 that I gave new cars to all 377 of my supervisors. This was at a time when they were laying off workers all over town, and every worker in the city was worried about losing his job. Obviously, the people who got the cars were thrilled, but what knocked me out was that our employees who worked for the 377 supervisors were just as thrilled, because it meant there weren't going to be any layoffs, and that the Golden Nugget was successful and safe, not like the other joints that were struggling. They started bragging to their friends about it, "Did you hear that Steve Wynn bought new cars for all his supervisors?" It didn't just strengthen the company, it created a culture.

You're 73, and have accomplished so much. Is there anything you'd put at the top of your bucket list?

I always wanted to meet Nelson Mandela, and I have friends who knew him, but I didn't get to meet Mandela. I always thought he was a spectacular character. What excites me the most is working on new projects. I spent all day yesterday, and I'm going to spend time today, working on some of these. Life is good. I'm having the time of my life with (my wife) Andrea; we just giggle throughout the day. When I'm working on these projects, I feel like a student. I've never felt like a master. I'm always thinking, "If I just bear down more, I'll find something new and terrific that will make people go, 'Wow!'" Something as simplistic as that keeps me totally jazzed. I'm sure you know what I mean. Then you keep working and working, and then you get that tremendous click when you get it right. When that happens, it's such a lift. It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, that's the feeling we're all looking for. ■



Wynn and Frank Sinatra.

THE MATHEMATICIAN WHO BEAT THE DEALER

A conversation with Ed Thorp, the man who revolutionised card counting.

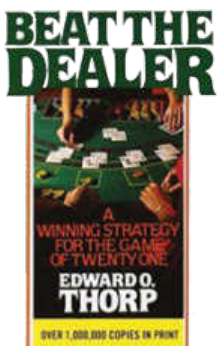
Text by BEN MEZRICH

Edward O. Thorp is a mathematics professor, hedge fund manager, and the author of the best-selling book *Beat the Dealer*, which mathematically proves that the house advantage in blackjack can be beaten by card counting. Thorp wrote his book when casinos began pressuring him off the floor after many remunerative forays.

As a highly trained mathematician and scientist, what caused you to gravitate towards casinos and specifically blackjack?

When I was in high school, I was interested in science. I had my own lab and delivered newspapers to make money to pay for equipment. This was during World War II and right after, when money was always scarce. One thing I was interested in was physics. One night, I was at a teacher's house, and the teacher had just come back from Vegas and was complaining that nobody could beat those guys. I thought about it, and at first I started focusing on roulette. I realised you could probably beat roulette by predicting the motion of the ball around the wheel. I tried to explain how to my teacher. Years went by, and in the '50s, when I was getting my masters in theoretical physics, I kept hearing people say you couldn't beat the casinos. Again, looking at roulette, I believed you could make a machine that could predict the spin and beat the game. I got a movie camera and a wheel and started filming spins. I used the information to start designing a machine that could beat roulette. After that, when I was at UCLA (a university in the U.S.), I was teaching after getting my Ph.D., and I had a year of instructorship before going to MIT (a technology institute). During that Christmas holiday, someone told me about a way to play blackjack almost even with the house. You'd still lose, but you wouldn't lose much. I figured I'd risk a few dollars. I went to Vegas, really to look at roulette, but sat down at a blackjack table and played for 40 minutes. I had a strategy card I'd made, and people were laughing at me. I started making plays on a hand that everyone thought was crazy, but I was following strategy. I drew a seven-card 21. And people thought this magic card had helped me win. I went back to UCLA, studied blackjack a little more, and immediately realised that this game was likely beatable, because as the cards were dealt, the quantities shifted around, sometimes in erratic ways that would have a huge influence on the odds.

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



What did you do with your system once you first developed it? Did you hit Vegas and win millions?

Actually, I presented the discovery at a meeting of the American Mathematical Society. At first, they were going to reject it, because they knew cranks present gambling systems all the time. Luckily, someone who knew me was on the committee and told them to listen to me, and I got to give my talk. There was a flood

of interest and nationwide publicity; the place turned into a crowded room full of rich gamblers and ordinary mathematicians. One of these rich gamblers wanted to back me. I wasn't going to do it, but casinos were ridiculing me, saying blackjack was unbeatable and that "we send cabs for people like you". So, I accepted the bankroll of two wealthy guys, they wanted to bring \$100 000 (about R1.7 million), which would be around R16 million today. I said, "Let's bring 10K," in case I lost. I told them, "If we play 20 hours, I can double your 10K." We played 40 hours, and we made \$11 000 (about R176000) on top of the 10K, and I was satisfied. I cashed my part of the winnings at the MIT cafeteria and bought my lunch with a \$100 bill.

Did you continue playing blackjack after that?

Yes, but I was eventually banned. I got more and more heat. They'd start cheating to beat me and shuffling up, and eventually they kicked me out of some casinos. So I wrote a book. I figured, "You don't want me to play? I'll send some other people... a lot of other people."

Do you think there's an ethical difference between using a machine, like the one you designed to beat roulette, and card counting?

When I built a wearable machine to beat roulette, we tested it out and turned dimes into piles of dimes pretty quickly. At that time, those machines were not in the purview of the casinos; there was no law against them, no rules. Then people built more machines to beat roulette and even blackjack. In 1985, Nevada, in the U.S., passed an emergency bill in record time to outlaw these devices. Any device the player brings in is now illegal. You can get a year in jail and a huge fine. Even the little strategy cards in my book are technically illegal. I don't have a clue whether that law is fair or not. If I were running a casino, I'm sure I would be upset if guys were coming in with machines.

What about the Phil Ivey story and schemes that seek advantages through flawed games or mistakes the casinos make?

If the casino is using defective cards, that's their problem. Their job is to fix it. You can't expect to tell a player not to use his eyes, or not to play with whatever advantages the casino is presenting.

Are the casinos still beatable today?

I know they are. They're definitely beatable. I have friends who do it, multiple ways. Card counting and shuffle tracking. If the casinos use automatic shufflers, you can't shuffle track, but then the casinos have to pay a toll to rent the shufflers. They have to decide. Do they pay the toll for automatic shufflers, or do they lose money every now and then to people who know what they are doing?

Do you still go to Vegas today? Do you still play?

I go to Vegas. Blackjack is boring to me now. The stakes are too small. It's a lot of work to make a small amount of money. ■

Beat the Dealer, Thorp's landmark 1962 book.



EXPECT EPIC

A definitive guide to doing Vegas like a boss.

Text by ANDREA BENNETT

Considering that 7 of the 10 top-grossing nightclubs in the United States are in Las Vegas, it's pretty clear what tourists and locals alike are getting up to at night in Sin City. XS at Encore Las Vegas leads that list with a 2014 revenue of \$103 million (R1,7 billion) to \$105 million (R1,8 billion), according to industry authority Nightclub & Bar, followed closely by Hakkasan with \$100 million (R1,6 billion) to \$103 million (R1,7 billion) in the same year.

In the past few years, major-name DJs such as Kaskade, Calvin Harris, Tiësto, Armin van Buuren, Avicii, and Steve Aoki (name a dozen more, they're all here) have secured regular appearance schedules or established long, and longer-term, residencies in the city's clubs, commanding incomes comparable to those of top professional athletes. Vegas has become a capital of EDM, with festivals like Electric Daisy Carnival solidifying its dominance. And nightclub programming, which includes spontaneous star appearances, is reaching a fever pitch. Plus, if you want a champagne shower administered by bodacious cocktail servers riding a 3-metre-tall Ferris wheel that's rolled to your party, Encore Beach Club has you covered (and this isn't the most outrageous way to celebrate, by a long shot). But don't think that Vegas nightclubs are all just one giant EDM factory, with high-budget bottles delivered by flying, bikinied superheroes. There's plenty of diversity, and the nightclubs are looking at new openings, more live music, and even a secret, social media-free club to shake things up this year.

At Wynn, where XS and Surrender retain mass popularity and Encore Beach Club is the gold standard amongst pool parties, the 1 200-capacity, "intimate" venue Tryst has been closed to make way for Intrigue, which opens in late April. "There will be an element of surprise to the club," promises Sean Christie, top brass in operations at Wynn, "That could mean that the venue changes or the music changes, we're not stuck to one format." Tryst's former kitchen will be turned into an invite-only, "no social media allowed" private club with its own entrances.

Meanwhile, expect the unexpected at Drai's, the rooftop party zone atop the Cromwell, which glows at night beneath the towering palms surrounding its main swimming pools. Credited as the founder of the nightclub scene in Las Vegas, Victor Drai has purposely gone the opposite way of those many clubs that boast bold-faced DJs. "My original thought (for Drai's) was that by the time I opened the club, the DJ craziness would be over, but that wasn't the case," Drai says. Nevertheless, he went into live hip-hop, signing Chris Brown to a residency. He renewed Brown's residency for 2016, and added ones for Trey Songz and A\$AP Rocky. Also on the docket, the Weeknd, Big Sean, Future, Niykee Heaton, Fabolous, Tyga, and more. "What people are expecting at my club is that if you come to see Chris Brown or another artist, they're right there in your face. Sometimes it's like, Trey Songz and 50 Cent are up there together, and it's like the 1940s and '50s, but on a different scale."

In 2014, Hakkasan Group bought Light Group and transformed the old Pure space in Caesars Palace to Omnia, modelling the club after a 4-storey, European opera house. It's been a massive showcase for celebrity DJs like Afrojack, Harris, and Van Buuren, to name a few. Nick McCabe, president of Hakkasan Group, says Omnia "will continue to embrace electronic music in the majority of our programming" in 2016, even bumping up the frequency of performances by favourite artists. In building Omnia, the focus was on ensuring that the guest's view of the talent wouldn't be impaired no matter where they are in the club.

Hakkasan, the Cantonese-themed restaurant with locations in Mumbai, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Miami, and New York City, has its largest-ever location in the MGM Grand. While other Hakkasans the world over get clubbier as the night wears on, the Vegas location combines the restaurant with a 5 574-square-metre, 3-floor nightclub whose talent roster includes Hardwell, Tiësto, and Aoki. "It really is like a Roman arena in terms of the energy that gets created in that room," McCabe says (go there when Aoki is throwing cake and spraying champagne, and it can certainly feel that way). But McCabe is looking forward to "a little more diversity in the music policy" in 2016; in other words, expect a few surprises.

When the Rockwell Group-designed Jewel opens at Aria, its nearly 2 000-guest capacity is considered small to midsize, Hakkasan promises a more intimate experience, with secluded suites above the dance floor, each with private entries, and a greater variety of music performances. The club scene, Christie anticipates, is due for a "market correction" as current contracts are up and clubs diversify their offerings, because entertainment expenses have reached heights "that for some clubs are unsustainable". Still, he says, "A star is a star, and they get paid star money." Vegas won't be losing any stars in its entertainment universe anytime soon. And as for another Vegas nightlife staple, the over-the-top bottle-service presentation? According to Christie and McCabe, that's not disappearing either. "People who live outside Las Vegas save up to get these memorable experiences; we just have to do them in our own vocabulary," Christie says. This has translated into the "Hey, Big Spender" bottle-service presentation at Encore Beach Club, for example, wherein the bottle gets rolled in on a Harley Davidson that's yours to keep at the end of the night (price tag, R2 million, and one sold during the Mayweather vs. Pacquiao fight weekend). "As spending continues to rise, so do expectations in terms of the fanfare that surrounds the VIP experience," McCabe says. At Omnia, a giant Champagne bottle can be delivered by aerial performers who descend from openings in the roof, and at Hakkasan, a large order can be accompanied by a traditional Chinese dragon dance, he says. "Vegas has always been built on epic resorts, epic shows, epic attractions, and so we have to deliver an epic experience."

i DJ Payday

➤ One DJ's 2-year residency in Vegas is R163 million. That doesn't include all his other income.

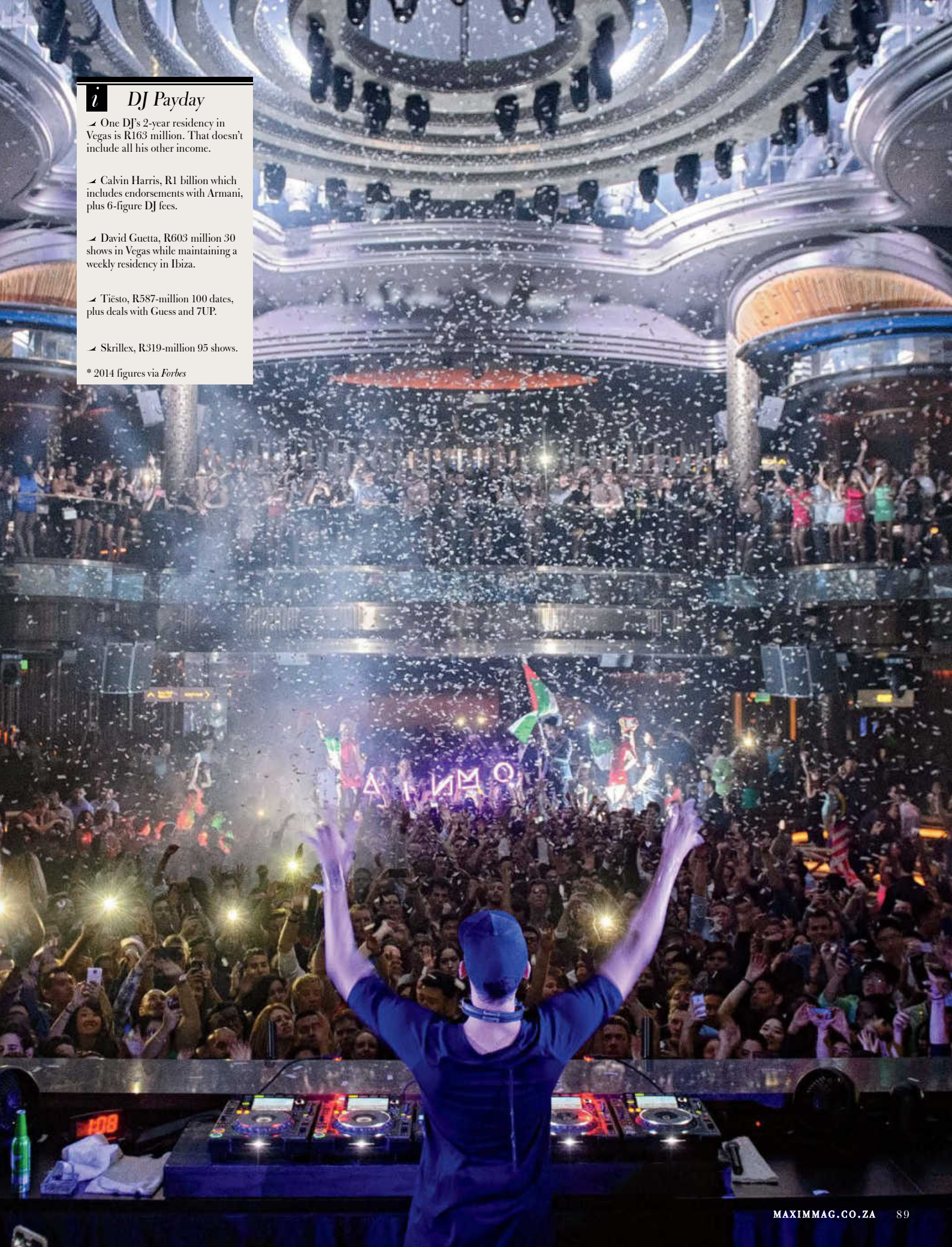
➤ Calvin Harris, R1 billion which includes endorsements with Armani, plus 6-figure DJ fees.

➤ David Guetta, R603 million 30 shows in Vegas while maintaining a weekly residency in Ibiza.

➤ Tiësto, R587-million 100 dates, plus deals with Guess and 7UP.

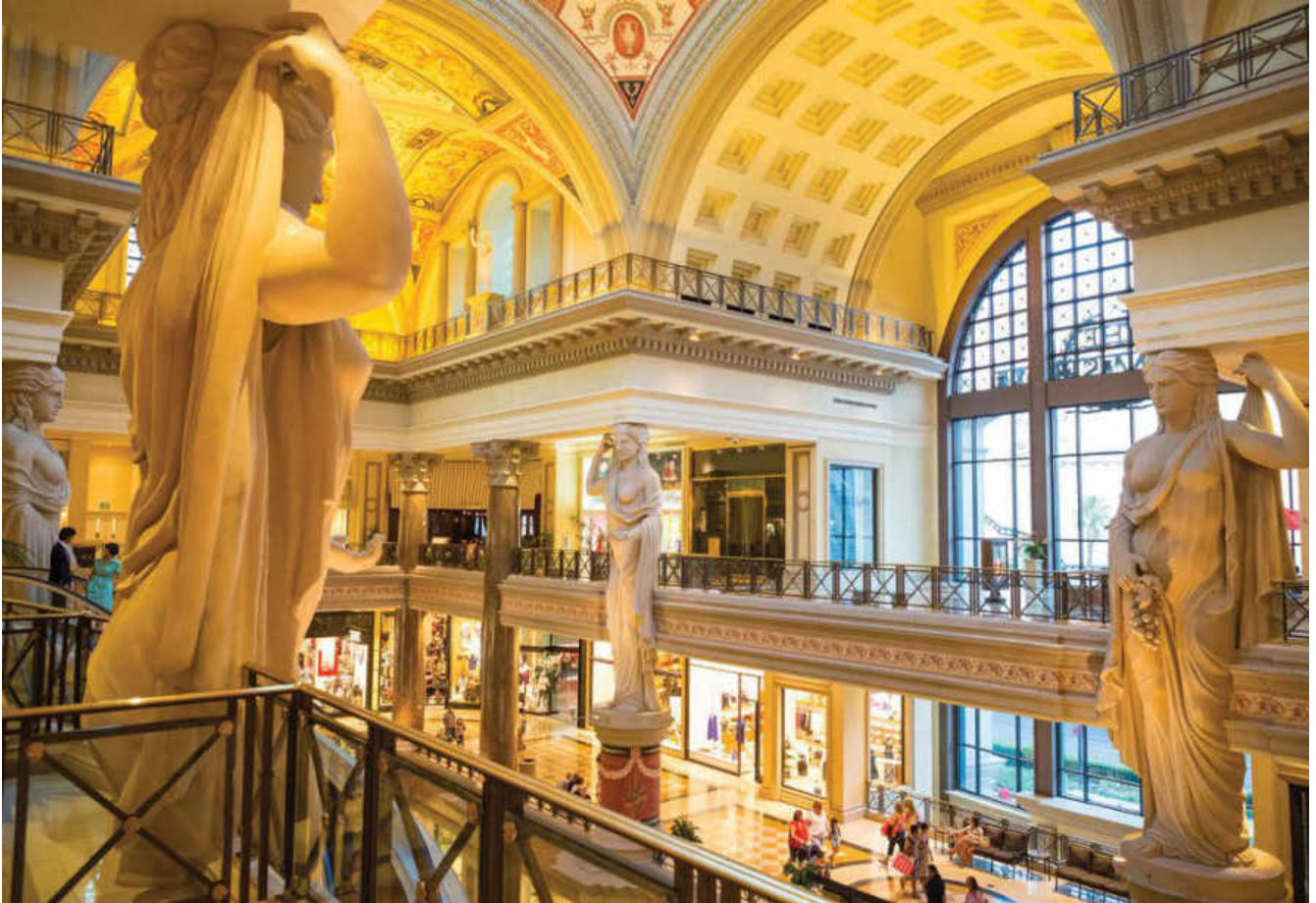
➤ Skrillex, R319-million 95 shows.

* 2014 figures via *Forbes*



LUXURY SHOPPING

Where to spend your money.



The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace.

Las Vegas' emergence as a major retail destination is relatively new in terms of the city's evolution. Only a few years ago, shopping in Vegas was considered a diversion for the bored, mostly female, significant others of gamblers. Now, the 6-kilometre Strip is chock-full of the world's highest-end retailers, many in multiples. According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, of the 41 million annual travellers who visit Las Vegas, 61 percent go shopping. And many international visitors come to Las Vegas exclusively to buy luxury items, a trend that doesn't seem to be waning as the dollar strengthens.

Indeed, Hedy Woodrow, SVP of retail at Wynn, says that Loro Piana's store on the Esplanade at Encore, which specialises in the brand's coveted vicuña wool items, plus made-to-measure services, shoes, and men's accessories, "sees huge sales when the Asian royal families are here, and significant sales from the Middle East and Asian demographics".

Service to foreign visitors is something the Forum Shops loves to tout. The Forum Shops, Vegas' premier shopping destination, keeps a

roster of employees who speak languages other than English, more than 20 languages in all, and can quickly access them from around the Forum to translate for non-English-speaking shoppers. "Recently, we had a Russian-speaking dignitary in, who was shopping and needed a translator, so we consulted our list and went to a restaurant that has a Russian server who was able to translate. That doesn't happen everywhere," she says.

Perhaps the most significant trend in recent years has been the entrance onto the market of less-expected brands (Moncler and Sandro in the Forum Shops, for instance), as well as those offering something exclusively for Vegas shoppers. At Hublot in the Forum Shops, for instance, a magnet for celebrities, boxers, and race car drivers, you might find the coveted Hublot Las Vegas Aerofusion watch. Limited to 21 pieces and retailing for around R345 000, it features the "WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS" sign on the back, and a lucky number seven made of rubies on the dial. "The transition of the shops is keeping pace with a male shopper that is so much more astute," Crampton says, "That's where our Canali and



The Shops at Crystals in CityCenter.

Zegna stores come into play.” Canali’s made-to-measure suiting, for instance, starts with a one-on-one consultation with a master tailor who has access to more than 500 Canali-exclusive fabrics; each Canali suit is constructed in Italy and finished with the owner’s name embroidered on the label. The dedicated male shopper might also account for the recent expansion of the Tod’s store, the only one in Las Vegas, which sells more than 700 pairs of its blue suede shoes each year (though there are 10 variations on Tod’s blue suede shoe, its wild popularity here is attributed to the clear Vegas-Elvis association).

Aside from the occasional and often blingy Vegas exclusives, what separates the Vegas shopping experience from other cities’ is the service. Of course, this is true at the dramatic Daniel Libeskind-designed Shops at Crystals in the mixed-use CityCenter, where retail, galleries, and restaurants contain superlatives like the largest Louis Vuitton in North America. Crystals is all about custom. Prada’s location there is one of only 50 of its boutiques in the world to offer made-to-measure (introduced in 2015). Inside a VIP room, the store’s

master tailor guides clients through more than 230 exclusive fabrics, including archival prints for bespoke dress shirts. Zegna and the massive, two-level Tom Ford offer custom programmes of their own.

In the end, Wynn’s Woodrow says, shopping in Vegas is about giving clients the same VIP service they expect in Vegas overall. For the star-studded Sinatra tribute filmed at Wynn’s Encore Theatre, which aired to commemorate Sinatra’s 100th birthday back in December, one of Woodrow’s stylists did what they often do, worked in conjunction with the stores on the Wynn and Encore esplanades to dress one of the prominent performers in his own suite before sending him out on stage. And you don’t have to be the celebrity Wynn won’t name to get the treatment. A portable Brioni Miror (used to help clients visualise their finished suits) is on the horizon, which will allow the boutique to bring the experience to clients via private appointments in their own suites. After all, shopping in Vegas is fabulous, but never leaving your own private villa is the ultimate luxury.

HOTELS

Where to rest your head.

Competition for visitor loyalty is so fierce in Las Vegas, hotel casinos are always getting refreshed, revamped, and rebranded. The Bellagio completed a R2,7 billion, resort-wide renovation that involved about 4 000 rooms over four years. And the new-new things of two years ago, the old Sahara becoming the SLS, super-chef Nobu Matsuhisa opening the first-ever Nobu Hotel within Caesars Palace, the Hotel at Mandalay Bay transforming into Delano, are all thriving now. A sprawling Chinese-themed hotel, Resorts World Las Vegas, is on the rise on the north end of the Strip, as is Alon Las Vegas, an R132 billion project from Australian company Crown Resorts that has already poached Jesse Waits, the former managing director of Encore's XS nightclub, the highest-grossing nightclub in the United States, to run its nightclub. Half the challenge in Vegas is catering to frequent visitors who are on the constant lookout for the newest and the most now.



Delano delanolasvegas.com

The Morgans Hotel Group smartly executed a Delano for the desert, with slatted gates opening onto massive boulders at the entry, and Mojave-inspired abstract artwork. What Morgans wisely left intact is the beautifully austere, intimate Bathhouse Spa, and the Alain Ducasse restaurant, Rivea, on the 64th floor, with unparalleled views. Skyfall Lounge is where you should begin and end, looking out of lofty windows onto a fiery sunset.



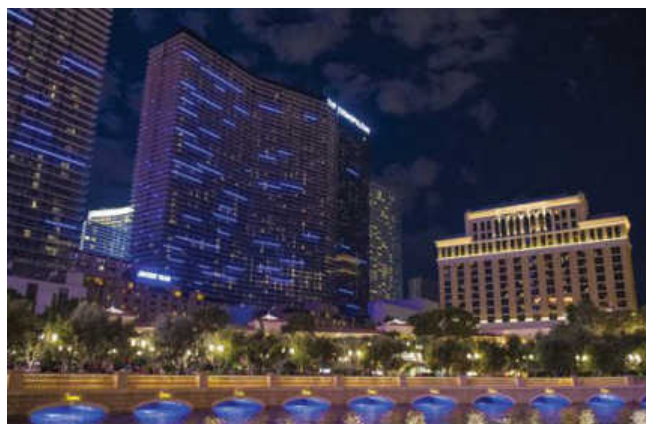
The Venetian venetian.com

With Venice as its design inspiration, the Venetian is a R247 billion themed extravaganza that features reproductions of Italian landmarks and motorised gondola rides. The hotel's spacious rooms are all at least 60 square metres apiece, with Roman tubs, and separate showers in the bathrooms. Perhaps a tribute to the Italian celebration of food, the Venetian is a gastronomic paradise with more than 30 restaurants to choose from.



Aria Resort & Casino aria.com

Aria Resort & Casino, the Cesar Pelli-designed centrepiece of MGM's massive CityCenter development, which opened in late 2009, has since become well-known not only for catering to its upscale business clientele in 4 000 guest rooms, but also for its high-tech amenities, ecoconscious design, sprawling casino floor, inventive dining scene, and incredible public art collection.



The Cosmopolitan cosmopolitanlasvegas.com

The lure of the Cosmo, a blend of riotous nightlife (Marquee Nightclub and the poolside Marquee Dayclub), boutique shopping and dining (rustic Italian at Scarpetta, a "secret" table inside Jose Andres' Jaleo, boozy shakes and great burgers at Holsteins, upscale Greek at Estiatorio Milos, and more), and a tri-level bar, the Chandelier, whose two million crystals enclose three distinctly different drinking experiences.

HIGH-ROLLER SUITES

Where to rest your head if you have more money, or luck, than God.

Though every suite has its price, not every one exchanges hands for the night in the kind of straightforward transaction you'd expect from a hotel. Relationships, connections, your line of credit in the casino, the amount of time you play on average, and a fair dose of backroom calculating all go into deciding whether you get to enter the most gilded doors in Las Vegas. Every casino has its own formula for determining levels of comps, says Comp City author Max Rubin. But you're likely only gaining access to the super suites when your credit line, the one you're actively playing, tops R1.6 million. "If you already bet R32 000 or more on a hand, you know your host, know your casino, know the system, and know that no matter what you do short of murder (sometimes), you're going to get whatever you want for free every time you come to town," he says, "Until you're broke."



The Villas at Caesars Palace caesars.com

In the last few months, Caesars Palace's best villas, such as the David Rockwell Villa atop Nobu Hotel within Caesars (think in-room Nobu chefs at your disposal, a private Zen garden, sauna, and media room), or Titus Villa, with its onyx tub and golden fixtures, private pool, barrel-vaulted ceilings, and piano room, have slowly opened up as part of the Anthology Collection.



Aria's Sky Villas ariaskysuites.com

Aria's has historically been open by invitation only, but with the right connections, anything is possible. The villas feature panoramic windows with views on the strip, and since last summer, they now have their own pool. These modern, high-tech suites range from 98 square metres for a 1-bedroom suite, to 191 square metres for the 2-bedroom penthouse. Both are perfect for in-room entertainment.



The Villas at the Mirage mgmresorts.com/mirage/thevillas

MGM has other villas many people never see, from the Villas at the Mirage, to the Bellagio Chairman and Presidential suites atop Bellagio's Spa Tower, 379-square-metre suites with their own indoor gardens and fountains. The good news for those who would rather pay a room rate than lose the equivalent several times over is that some of the city's historically invitation-only spaces are coming online for those willing to pony up for them.



The Mansion at MGM Grand mgmgrand.com

The Mansion at MGM Grand, a collection of 29 astoundingly luxurious villas on the Strip, ranges in size from 222 to 836 square metres, some parts including private indoor pools, and are perhaps the worst-kept secret on the Strip. However, all bets are off when it comes to special occasions like a major fight or a holiday. On big nights like New Year's Eve, chances are slim.

RESTAURANTS

Where to eat.



Yardbird Southern Table & Bar runchickenrun.com

It's not dinner at Yardbird Southern Table & Bar, it's supper. Fried chicken, biscuits, watermelon, devilled eggs, and shrimp and grits served up family-style bring a more casual flair to the Venetian. Maple-glazed bacon doughnuts, a daily quiche, and chocolate-chip pancakes with banana compote, bourbon maple syrup, and peanut butter (an ode to Elvis) make up the brunch menu served Fridays through Sundays. Bourbon, naturally, is a must-order. Frequent diners may even want to snag one of the bourbon lockers in the private dining room to score deals on liquors that can await a return visit.



Joël Robuchon joel-robuchon.com

It's hard to believe that this restaurant is just steps off the casino floor of the MGM Grand. It's almost like walking into the dining room of a private mansion, but it's actually the only restaurant in the Western Hemisphere from acclaimed French chef Joël Robuchon.



Tao Asian Bistro taolasvegas.com

Patrons are sure to spot a celebrity dining beneath the massive Buddha that oversees Tao Asian Bistro. The Chinese, Japanese, and Thai influences sway towards dishes such as sushi, sea bass satay, crispy "snapper in the sand," and imperial Wagyu sirloin.

DAY CLUBS

Where to party while the sun's still out.



Ghostbar Dayclub palms.com/nightlife/ghostbar

Every Saturday in the winter, right until the outdoor pools open in March, GBDC (otherwise known as Ghostbar Dayclub) opens in the Palms, because, public servants that they are, “the day-drinking audience needs a new home base during the winter months,” says Palms marketing director Melanie DeLillo. You won’t find Wagyu meatballs at this party, which starts at 1 p.m., but you’ll likely find a bedazzled, pink shopping cart filled with McDonald’s cheeseburgers, pushed by kindhearted go-go dancers who wouldn’t want you to end your flabongo race on an empty stomach.



Tao Beach taolasvegas.com/tao-beach

Sitting atop Tao Asian Bistro and Nightclub, Tao Beach was the first daytime pool party in Vegas. There wasn’t anything like it in 2007 when the 1672-square-metre club first opened. Now entering its ninth season, Tao Beach features a 9-metre bar and air-conditioned cabanas.



Marquee Dayclub marqueelasvegas.com/dayclub

Nearly 2 000 revellers are as barely clad as usual, drinking in the grand cabanas, playing blackjack at the “outdoor” gaming tables, and frolicking in the heated pool to DJs and performers.

PRIVATE GAMBLING

Where to roll the dice when the crowds are just too much.

Ever wonder how to get all those comps you hear about in Vegas, the private jets, the big-fight tickets, the bottle service at clubs whose lines part like the Red Sea for Moses? Steve Cyr, the notorious freelance gaming host turned VP of player development at the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino, can tell you. It's simple, "play like Larry Flynt." Cyr's ideal customer would be one who's addicted to the thrill of gambling, or at least has enough money to treat mind-blowing amounts of money as recreational losses. Amongst his current estimated 70 high rollers (those who will play with a weekend minimum of R1,6 million and 20 whales R8 million and R60 million are, "Larry, a couple of generals from outside the United States, and dot-commers." To those who love the glamour of the big comp, it's the recreational aspect of gambling that's key. Gamers are assigned a "comp worth," determined by their betting average. The bottom line for gaming experts is that the only way to truly enjoy the world's wildest comps is to get on board with the fact that they inevitably accompany big losses. Anthony Curtis, one of the most consulted Vegas experts in the world, breaks it down this way, "There's a gamut of comping. The first thing you want to do is sign up for a player card," the only way casinos can actually begin to evaluate your play. Hosts will analyse your player, worthiness, Curtis says. "Generally speaking, you're not analysed by your results, but on your theoretical value. Losers often get more comps."



Bobby's Room at the Bellagio

bellagio.com/en/casino/bobbys-room.html

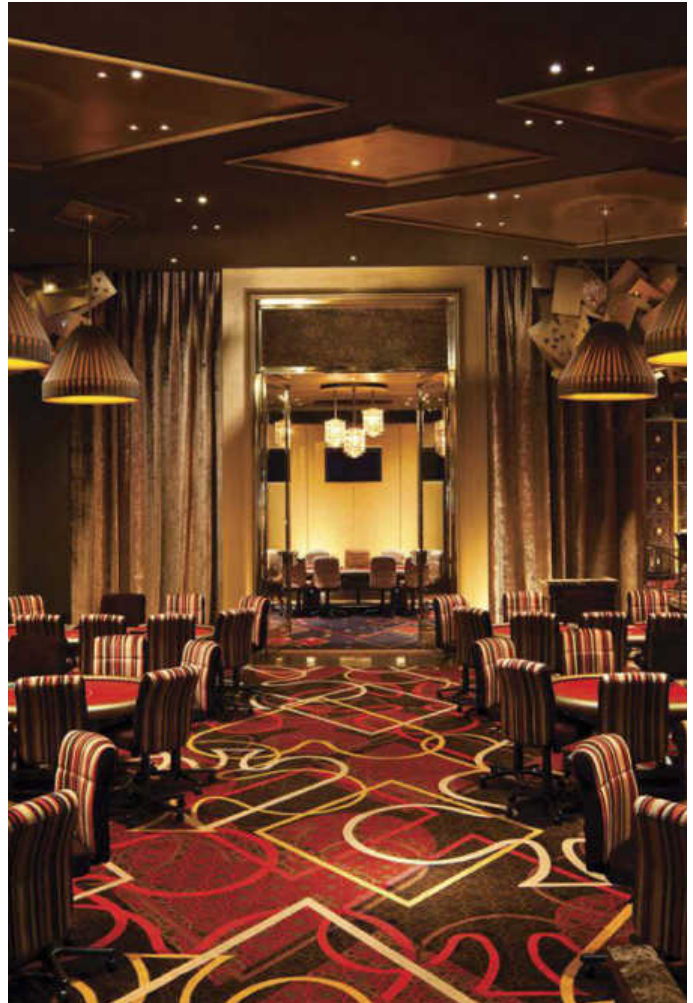
Bobby's Room (named after Bobby Baldwin) at the Bellagio is another favourite, an exclusive room with just two tables and a lot of privacy.



Talon Club at the Cosmopolitan

cosmopolitanoflasvegas.com

At the Cosmopolitan's high-stakes, modernised gentleman's speakeasy, the Talon Club, you can shell out R56 000 for a shot from a bottle of the Balvenie Fifty. New baccarat and roulette games, soon to be installed, will add to the glam factor.



Ivey Room at Aria Resort & Casino aria.com

For those who are in it for the glamour, there are a few places they'll automatically head. Poker players find that some of the biggest high-stakes games in the world run regularly out of the sleek, modern Ivey Room at Aria Resort & Casino (named for Phil Ivey, who has won 10 World Series of Poker bracelets, and a World Poker Tour title, amongst other things).

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